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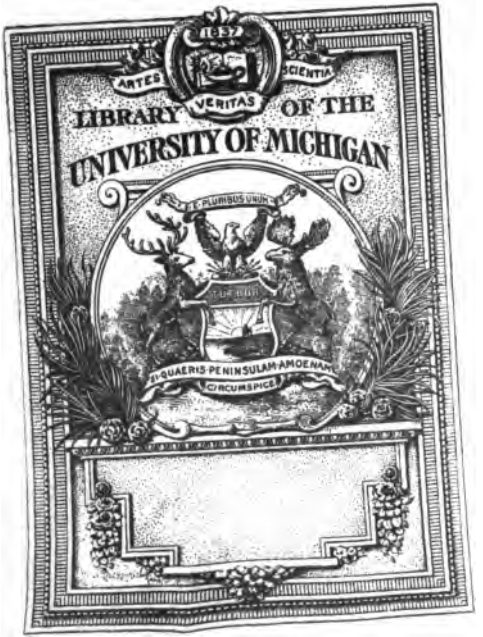
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VOL. 1191.

A DAUGHTER OF HETH BY WILLIAM BLACK.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

"If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

A DAUGHTER OF HETH.

A NOVEL.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1871.

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A DAUGHTER OF HETH.

CHAPTER I.

Coquette's Arrival.

THE tide of battle had flowed onward from the village to the Manse. The retreating party, consisting of the Minister's five sons, were driven back by force of numbers, contesting every inch of the ground. Hope had deserted them; and there now remained to them but one chance—to reach the fortress of the Manse in safety, and seek the shelter of its great stone wall.

The enemy numbered over a dozen; and the clangour and clamour of the pursuit waxed stronger as they pressed on the small and compact body of five. The weapons on both sides were stones picked up from the moorland road; and the terrible aim of the Whaup—the eldest of the Minister's sons—had disfigured more than one mother's son of the turbulent crowd that pursued. He alone—a long-legged Herculean lad of eighteen—kept in front of his retreating brothers, facing the foe boldly,

and directing his swift, successive discharges with a deadly accuracy of curve upon the noses of the foremost. But his valour was of no avail. All seemed over. Their courage began to partake of the recklessness of despair. Nature seemed to sympathise with this disastrous fate; and to the excited eyes of the fugitives it appeared that the sun was overcast—that the moor around was blacker and more silent than ever—and that the far stretch of the sea, with the gloomy hills of Arran, had grown dark as if with a coming storm. Thus does the human mind confer an anthropomorphic sentiment on all things, animate and inanimate: a profound observation which occurred to Mr. Gillespie, the Schoolmaster, who, being on one occasion in the town of Ayr, when horse-racing, or some such godless diversion was going forward, and having meekly enquired for some boiled eggs, in a very small and crowded hostelry, the young woman in charge indignantly exclaimed, "Losh bless me! Do ye think the hens can remember to lay eggs in all this bustle and hurry!"

Finally, the retreating party turned and ran—ignominiously, pell-mell—until they had gained the high stone wall surrounding the Manse. They darted into the garden, slammed the door to, and barricaded it; the Whaup sending up a peal of

defiant laughter that made the solemn echoes of the old-fashioned house ring again. Outside this shriek of joy was taken as a challenge, and the party on the other side of the wall returned a roar of mingled mockery and anger which was not pleasant to hear. It meant a blockade and bombardment, with perhaps a fierce assault when the patience of the besiegers should give way. But the Whaup was not of a kind to indulge in indolent security when his enemies were murmuring hard by. In an incredibly short space of time he and his brothers had wheeled up to the wall a couple of empty barrels, and across these was hurriedly thrown a broad plank. The Whaup filled his hands with the gravel of the garden walk, and jumped up on the board. The instant that his head appeared above the wall, there was a yell of execration. He had just time to discharge his two handfuls of gravel upon the besiegers, when a shower of stones was directed at him, and he ducked his head.

"This is famous!" he cried. "This is grand! It beats Josephus! Mair gravel, Jock—mair gravel, Jock!"

Now, in the Manse of Airlie, there was an edition of Josephus' works, in several volumes, which was the only profane reading allowed to the

boys on Sunday. Consequently it was much studied —especially the plates of it; and one of these plates represented the siege of Jerusalem, with the Romans being killed by stones thrown from the wall. No sooner, therefore, had the Whaup mounted on the empty barrels, than his brothers recognised the position. They were called upon to engage in a species of warfare familiar to them. They formed themselves into line, and handed up to the Whaup successive supplies of stones and gravel, with a precision they could not have exceeded had they actually served in one of the legions of Titus.

The Whaup, however, dared not discharge his ammunition with regularity. He had to descend to feints; for he was in a most perilous position, and might at any time have had his head rendered amorphous. He therefore from time to time showed his hand over the wall; the expected volley of stones followed, and then he sprang up to return the compliment with all his might. Howls of rage greeted each of his efforts; and, indeed, the clangour rose to an extraordinary pitch. The besiegers were furious. They were in an open position, while their foe was well entrenched; and no man can get a handful of gravel pitched into his face, and also preserve his temper. Revenge was out of the question. The sagacious Whaup never appeared

when they expected him; and when he did appear, it was an instantaneous up and down, giving them no chance at all of doing him an injury. They raved and stormed, and the more bitterly they shouted names at him, and the more fiercely they heaped insults upon him, the more joyously he laughed. The noise, without and within, was appalling; never, in the memory of man, had such an uproar resounded around the quiet Manse of Airlie.

Suddenly there was a scared silence within the walls, and a rapid disappearance of the younger of the besieged.

"Oh, Tam, here's our faither!" cried one.

But Tam—elsewhere named the Whaup—was too excited to hear. He was shouting and laughing, hurling gravel and stones at his enemies, when——

When a tall, stern-faced, grey-haired man, who wore a rusty black coat and a white neckcloth, and who bore in his hand, ominously, a horsewhip, walked firmly and sedately across the garden. The hero of the day was still on the barrels, taunting his foes, and helping himself to the store of ammunition which his colleagues had piled upon the plank.

"Who's lang-leggit now? Where are the Minis-

ter's chickens now? Why don't you go and wash your noses in the burn?"

The next moment the Whaup uttered what can only be described as a squeal. He had not been expecting an attack from the rear; and there was fright as well as pain in the yell which followed the startling cut across the legs which brought him down. In fact, the lithe curl of the whip round his calves was at once a mystery and a horror, and he tumbled rather than jumped from the plank, only to find himself confronted by his father, whose threatening eye and terrible voice soon explained the mystery.

"How daur ye, sir," exclaimed Mr. Cassilis, "how daur ye, sir, transform my house into a Bedlam! For shame, sir, that your years have brought ye no more sense than to caper wi' a lot of schoolboys. Have ye no more respect for yourself—have ye no more respect for the college you have come home from—than to behave yourself like a farm-callant, and make yourself the byword of the neighbourhood? You are worse than the youngest in the house——"

"I didn't know you were in the Manse," said the Whaup, wondering whither his brothers had run.

"So much the worse—so much the worse," said the Minister, severely, "that ye have no better guide

to your conduct than the fear o' being caught. Why, sir, when I was your age, I was busier with my Greek Testament than with flinging names at a wheen laddies!"

"It was mair than names, as ye might hae observed from their noses, had ye seen them," remarked the Whaup, confidentially.

Indeed, he was incorrigible, and the Minister turned away. His eldest son had plenty of brains, plenty of courage, and an excellent physique; but he could not be brought to acquire a sense of the proper gravity or duties of manhood, nor yet could he be prevailed on to lay aside the mischievous tricks of his youth. He was the terror of the parish. It was hoped that a winter at Glasgow University would tame down the Whaup; but he returned to Airlie worse than ever, and formed his innocent brothers into a regular band of marauders, of whom all honest people were afraid. The long-legged daredevil of the Manse, with his boldness, his cunning, and his agility, left neither garden, nor farmyard, nor kitchen alone. Worthy villagers were tripped up by bits of invisible twine. Mysterious knocks on the window woke them up at the dead of night. When they were surprised that the patience of their sitting hen did not meet with its usual reward, they found that chalk eggs had been sub-

stituted for the natural ones. Their cats came home with walnut-shells on their feet. Stable doors were mysteriously opened. Furious bulls were found lassoed, so that no man dare approach them. The work of the Whaup was everywhere evident—it was always the Whaup. And then that young gentleman would come quietly into the villagers' houses, and chat confidently with them, and confide to them his great grief that his younger brother, Watty—notwithstanding that people thought him a quiet, harmless, pious, and rather sneaking boy—was such a desperate hand for mischief. Some believed him; others reproached him for his wickedness in blaming his own sins upon the only one of the Minister's family who had an appearance of Christian humility and grace.

When the Minister had gone into the house, the Whaup—in nowise downcast by his recent misfortune, although he still was aware of an odd sensation about the legs—mounted once more upon the barrels to reconnoitre the enemy. He had no wish to renew the fight, for Saturday was his father's day for study and meditation; no stir or sound was allowed in the place from morning till night; and certainly, had the young gentlemen of the Manse known that their father was indoors, they would have let the village boys rave outside in safety.

Cool and confident as he was, the Whaup did not care to bring his father out a second time; and so he got up on the barricades merely for the sake of information.

The turmoil outside had quieted down, partly through the ignominious silence of the besieged, and partly through the appearance of a new object of public attention. The heads of the dozen lads outside were now turned towards the village, whence there was coming along the road the Minister's dog-cart, driven by his ancient henchman, Andrew Bogue. Beside the driver sat some fair creature in fluttering white and yellow—an apparition that seldom met the vision of the inhabitants of Airlie. The Whaup knew that this young lady was his cousin from France, who was now, being an orphan, and having completed her education, coming to live at the Manse. But who was the gentleman behind, who sat with his arm flung carelessly over the bar, while he smiled and chatted to the girl, who had half turned round to listen to him?

"Why, it is Lord Earlshope," said the Whaup, with his handsome face suddenly assuming a frown. "What business has Earlshope to talk to my cousin?"

Presently the gentleman let himself down from the dog-cart, took off his hat to her who had been

his companion, and turned and went along the road again. The dog-cart drove up to the door. The Whaup, daring his enemies to touch him, went out boldly, and proceeded to welcome the new-comer to Airlie.

"I suppose you are my cousin," he said.

"I suppose I am," said the young girl, speaking with an accent so markedly French that he looked at her in astonishment. But then she, in turn, regarded him for a moment with a pair of soft dark eyes, and he forgot her accent. He vaguely knew that she had smiled to him—and that the effect of the smile was rather bewildering—as he assisted her down from the dog-cart, and begged her to come in through the garden.

CHAPTER II.

Coquette's Religion.

THE Whaup was convinced that he had never seen upon earth, nor yet in his Sunday-morning dreams of what heaven might be like, any creature half so beautiful, and bewitching, and graceful, as the young girl who now walked beside him. Yet he could not tell in what lay her especial charm; for, regarding her with the eye of a critic, the Whaup observed that she was full of defects. Her face was pale and French looking; and, instead of the rosy bloom of a pretty country lass, there was a tinge of southern sun-brown over her complexion. Then her hair was in obvious disorder—some ragged ends of silky brown being scattered over her forehead, and surmounted, in Sir Peter Lely fashion, by a piece of yellow silk ribbon; while there were big masses behind that only partially revealed a shapely sun-burned neck. Then her eyes, though they were dark and expressive, had nothing of the keen and merry look of your bouncing country belle. Nor

was there anything majestic in her appearance; although, to be sure, she walked with an ease and grace which gave even to an observer a sense of suppleness and pleasure. Certainly, it was not her voice which had captivated him, for when he at first heard her absurd accent, he had nearly burst out laughing. Notwithstanding all which, when she turned the pale, pretty, foreign face to him, and said, with a smile that lit up the dark eyes and showed a glimpse of pearly teeth—"It rains not always in your country, then?"—he remarked no stiffness in her speech, but thought she spoke in music. He could scarcely answer her. He had already succumbed to the spell of the soft eyes and the winning voice that had earned for this young lady, when she was but four years of age, the unfair name of Coquette.

"Do you know Lord Earlshope?" he said, abruptly.

She turned to him with a brief glance of surprise. It seemed to him that every alteration in her manner—and every new position of her figure—was an improvement.

"That gentleman who did come with us? No; I do not know him."

"You were talking to him as if you did know him very well," said the Whaup, sternly. He was

beginning to suspect this cousin of his of being a deceitful young person.

"I had great pleasure of speaking to him. He speaks French—he is very agreeable."

"Look here," said the Whaup, with a sudden knitting of his brow, "I won't have you talk to Earlshope, if you live in this house. Now, mind!"

"What!" she cried, with a look of amused wonder, "I do think you are jealous of me already. You will make me—what is it called? *vaniteuse.* Is it not a lark!"

She smiled as she looked with rather a surprised air at her new cousin. The Whaup began to recall German legends of the devil appearing in the shape of a beautiful woman.

"Ladies in this country don't use expressions like that," said he; adding scornfully, "If that is a French custom, you'd better forget it."

"Is it not right to say 'a lark?'" she asked, gravely. "Papa used to say that, and mamma and I got much of our English from him. I will not say it again, if you wish."

"Did you call it English?" said the Whaup, with some contempt.

At this moment the Minister came out from the door of the Manse, and approached his niece. She ran to him, took both his hands in hers, and then

suddenly, and somewhat to his discomfiture, kissed him; while in the excitement of the moment she forgot to speak her broken English, and showered upon him a series of pretty phrases and questions in French.

"Dear me!" he observed, in a bewildered way.

"She is a witch," said the Whaup to himself, standing by, and observing with an angry satisfaction that this incomprehensible foreigner, no matter what she did or said, was momentarily growing more graceful. The charm of her appearance increased with every new look of her face, with every new gesture of her head. And then—when she seemed to perceive that her uncle had not understood a word of her tirade—and when, with a laugh and a blush, she threw out her pretty hands in a dramatic way, and gave ever so slight a shrug with her small shoulders—the picture of her confusion and embarrassment was perfect.

"Oh, she is an actress—I hate actresses!" said the Whaup.

Meanwhile his cousin recovered herself and began to translate into stiff and curious English (watching her pronunciation carefully) the rapid French she had been pouring out. But her uncle interrupted her, and said—

"Come into the house first, my bairn, and we

will have the story of your journey afterwards. Dear me, I began to think ye could speak nothing but that unintelligible Babel o' a tongue."

So he led her into the house, the Whaup following; and Catherine Cassilis, whom they had been taught by letter to call Coquette, looked round upon her new home.

She was the only daughter of the Minister's only brother, a young man who had left Scotland in his teens, and never returned. He had been such another as the Whaup in his youth, only that his outrages upon the decorum of his native village had been of a somewhat more serious kind. His family were very glad when he went abroad; and when they did subsequently hear of him they heard no good. Indeed, a very moderate amount of wildishness became something horrible when rumoured through the quiet of Airlie; and the younger Cassilis was looked on as the prodigal son, whom no one was anxious should return. At length the news came that he had married some foreign woman—and this put a climax to his wickedness. It is true that the captain of a Greenock ship, having been at St. Nazaire, had there met Mr. Cassilis, who had taken his countryman home to his house, some few miles further along the banks of the Loire. The

captain carried to Greenock, and to Airlie, the news that the Minister's brother was the most fortunate of men. The French lady he had married was of the most gracious temperament, and had the sweetest looks. She had brought her husband a fine estate on the Loire, where he lived like a foreign prince, not like the brother of a parish minister. They had a daughter—an elf, a fairy, with dark eyes and witching ways—who lisped French with the greatest ease in the world. Old Gavin Cassilis, the minister, heard, and was secretly rejoiced. He corresponded, in his grave and formal fashion, with his brother; but he would not undertake a voyage to a country that had abandoned itself to infidelity. The Minister knew no France but the France of the Revolution time; and so powerfully had he been impressed in his youth by the stories of the worship of the Goddess of Reason, that, while the ancient languages were as familiar to him as his own, while he knew enough of Italian to read the Inferno, and had mastered even the technicalities of the German theologians, nothing would ever induce him to study French. It was a language abhorred—it had lent itself to the most monstrous apostacy of recent times.

The mother and father of Coquette died within a few hours of each other, cut off by a fever which

was raging over the south of France; and the girl, according to their wish, was sent to a school in the neighbourhood, where she remained until she was eighteen. She was then transferred to the care of her only living relative—Mr. Gavin Cassilis, the parish Minister of Airlie. She had never seen anything of Scotland or of her Scotch relations. The life that awaited her was quite unknown to her. She had no dread of the possible consequences of removing her thoroughly southern nature into the chiller social atmosphere of the north. So far, indeed, her journey had been a pleasant one; and she saw nothing to make her apprehensive of the future. She had been met at the railway station by the Minister's man, Andrew; but she had no opportunity of noticing his more than gloomy temperament, or the scant civility he was inclined to bestow on a foreign jade who was dressed so that all the men turned and looked at her as though she had been a snare of Satan. For they had scarcely left the station, and were making their way upward to the higher country, when they overtook Lord Earlshope, who was riding leisurely along. Andrew—much as he contemned the young nobleman, who had not the best of reputations in the district—touched his cap, as in duty bound. His lordship glanced with a look of surprise and involuntary ad-

miration at the young lady who sat on the dog-cart; and then rode forward, and said—

"May I have the pleasure of introducing myself to Mr. Cassilis' niece? I hope I am not mistaken."

With a frankness which appalled Andrew—who considered this boldness on the part of an unmarried woman to be indicative of the licentiousness of French manners—the young lady replied; and in a few minutes Lord Earlshope had succeeded in drawing her into a pleasant conversation in her own tongue. Nay, when they had reached Earlshope, nothing would do for the fair-haired young gentleman but that Miss Cassilis must enter the gate and drive through the park, which ran parallel with the road. He himself was forced to leave his horse with the lodge-keeper, the animal having become mysteriously lame on coming up the hill; but, with a careless apology and a laugh, he had jumped on to the dog-cart behind, and begged Andrew for a "lift" as far as the Manse.

Andrew thought it was none of his business. Had his companion been an ordinarily sober and discreet young woman, he would not have allowed her to talk so familiarly with this graceless young nobleman; but, said the Minister's man to himself, they were well met.

"They jabbered away in their foreign lingo," said Andrew, that evening, to his wife Leezibeth, the housekeeper, "and I'm thinking it was siccan a language was talked in Sodom and Gomorrah. And he was a' smiles, and she was a' smiles; and they seemed to think nae shame o' themselves, goin' through a decent country-side. It's a dispensation, Leezibeth; that's what it is—a dispensation—this hussy coming amang us wi' her French silks and her satins, and her deevlish license o' talkin' like a play-actor."

"Andrew, my man," said Leezibeth, with a touch of spite (for she had become rather a partisan of the stranger), "she'll no be the only lang tongue we hae in the parish. And what ails ye at her talking, if ye dinna understand it? As for her silks and her satins, the Queen on the throne couldna set them off better."

"Didna I tell ye!" said Andrew, eagerly, "the carnal eye is attracted already. She has cuist her wiles owre ye, Leezibeth. It's a temptation."

"Will the body be quiet!" said Leezibeth, with rising anger. "He's fair out o' his wits to think that a woman come to my time o' life should be thinking o' silks and satins for mysel'. 'Deed, Andrew, there's no much fear o' my spending siller

on finery, when ye never see a bawbee without running for an auld stocking to put it in!"

Oddly enough, Andrew was the only one of them who apprehended any evil from the arrival of the young girl who had come to pass her life among people very dissimilar from herself. The simplicity and frankness of her manner towards Lord Earlshope he exaggerated into nothing short of license; and his "dour" imagination had already perceived in her some strange resemblance to the Scarlet Woman, the Mother of Abominations, who sat on the seven hills and mocked at the saints. Andrew was a morbid and morose man, of Seceder descent; and he had inherited a tinge of the old Cameronian feeling, not often met with now-a-days. He felt it incumbent on him to be a sort of living protest in the Manse against the temporising and feeble condition of theological opinion he found there. He looked upon Mr. Cassilis as little else than a "Moderate;" and even made bold, upon rare occasions, to confront the Minister himself.

"Andrew," said Mr. Cassilis one day, "you are a rebellious servant, and one that would intemperately disturb the peace o' the Church."

"In nowise, Minister, in nowise," retorted Andrew, with firmness. "But in maitters spiritual I will yield obedience to no man. There is but one

King in Sion, sir, for a' that a dominant and Erastian Estayblishment may say."

"Toots, toots," said the Minister, testily. "Let the Establishment alone, Andrew. It does more good than harm, surely."

"Maybe, maybe," replied Andrew (with an uncomfortable feeling that the Establishment had supplied him with the carnal advantages of a good situation), "but I am not wan that would rub out the ancient landmarks o' the faith which our fathers suffered for, and starved for, and bled for. The auld religion is dying out owre fast as it is, but there is still a remnant o' Jacob among the Gentiles, and they are not a' like Nicodemus, that was ashamed o' the truth that was in him, and bided until the nicht."

It was well, therefore, that this fearless denouncer did not hear the following conversation which took place between the Minister and his niece. The latter had been conducted by Leezibeth to see the rooms prepared for her. With these she was highly delighted. A large chamber, which had served as a dormitory for the boys, was now transformed into a sitting-room for her, and the boys' beds had been carried into a neighbouring hayloft, which had been cleared out for the purpose. In this sitting-room she found her piano,

which had been sent on some days before, and a number of other treasures from her southern home. There were two small square windows in the room, and they looked over the garden, with its moss-grown wall, and beyond that, over a corner of Airlie moor, and beyond that again, over the sloping and wooded country which stretched away downward to the western coast. A faint grey breadth of sea was visible there, and the island of Arran, with its peaked mountains grown a pale, transparent blue, lay along the horizon.

"Ye might hae left that music-box in France," said Leezibeth. "It's better fitted for there than here."

"I could not live without it," said Coquette, with a quiet smile.

"Then I'd advise ye no to open it to-day, which is a day o' preparation for the solemn services o' the Sabbath. The denner is on the table, miss."

The young lady went down stairs and took her place at the table, all the boys staring at her with open mouth and eyes. It was during her talk with the Minister that she casually made a remark about "the last time she had gone to mass."

Consternation sat upon every face. Even the

Minister looked deeply shocked, and asked her if she had been brought up a Roman.

"A Catholic? Yes," said Coquette, simply, and yet looking strangely at the faces of the boys. They had never before had a Catholic come among them unawares.

"I am deeply grieved and pained," said the Minister, gravely. "I knew not that my brother had been a pervert from the communion of our Church——"

"Papa was not a Catholic," said Coquette. "Mamma and I were. But it matters nothing. I will go to your church—it is the same to me."

"But," said the Minister, in amazement and horror, "it is worse that you should be so indifferent than that you should be a Catholic. Have you never been instructed as to the all-importance of your religious faith?"

"I do not know much—but I will learn, if you please," she said. "I have only tried to be kind to the people around me—that is all. I will learn if you will teach me. I will be what you like."

"Her ignorance is lamentable," muttered the Minister to himself; and the boys looked at her askance and with fear. Perhaps she was a secret friend and ally of the Pope himself.

But the Whaup, who had been inclined to show

an independent contempt for his new cousin, no sooner saw her get into trouble, than he startled everybody by exclaiming, warmly—

"She has got the best part of all religions, if she does her best to the people around her."

"Thomas," said the Minister, severely, "you are not competent to judge of these things."

But Coquette looked at the lad, and saw that his face was burning, and she thanked him with her expressive eyes. Another such glance would have made the Whaup forswear his belief in the Gunpowder Plot; and as it was, he began to cherish wild notions about Roman Catholicism. That was the first result of Coquette's arrival at Airlie.

CHAPTER III.

A Penitent.

WHEN, on the Sunday morning, Coquette, having risen, dressed, and come into her sitting-room, went forward to one of the small windows, she uttered a cry of delight. She had no idea that the surroundings of her new home were so lovely. Outside the bright sunlight of the morning fell on the Minister's garden and orchard—a somewhat tangled mass, it is true, of flower beds, and roses, and apple trees, with patches of cabbage, pease, and other kitchen stuff filling up every corner. A white rose-tree nearly covered the wall of the Manse, and hung its leaves round the two windows; and when she opened one of these to let the fresh air rush in, there was a scent of roses that filled the room in a second.

But far beyond the precincts of the Manse stretched a great landscape, so spacious, so varied, that her eye ran over it with increasing delight and wonder, and could not tell which part of it were

the more beautiful. First, the sea. Just over the mountains of the distant island of Arran—a spectral blue mass lying along the horizon—there was a confusion of clouds that let the sunlight fall down on the plain of water in misty, slanting lines. The sea was dark, except where those rays smote it sharp and clear, glimmering in silver; while a black steamer slowly crept across the lanes of blinding light, a mere speck. Down in the south there was a small grey cloud, the size of a man's hand, resting on the water; but she did not know that that was the rock of Ailsa. Then, nearer shore the white waves and the blue sea ran into two long bays, bordered by a waste of ruddy sand; and above the largest of these great bays she saw a thin line of dark houses and gleaming slates, stretching from the old-world town of Saltcoats up to its more modern suburb of Ardrossan, where a small fleet of coasting vessels rocked in the harbour. So near were these houses to the water that, from where Coquette stood, they seemed a black fringe or breastwork to the land; and the spire of Saltcoats church, rising from above the slates, was sharply defined against the windy plain of tumbling waves.

Then inland. Her window looked south; and before her stretched the fair and fertile valleys and hills of Ayrshire—undulating squares and patches

of yellow, intersected by dark green lines of copse running down to the sea. The red flames of the Stevenston ironworks flickered in the daylight; a mist of blue smoke hung over Irvine and Troon; and, had her eyes known where to look, she might have caught the pale grey glimmer of the houses of Ayr. As the white clouds sailed across the sky, blue shadows crept across this variegated plain beneath, momentarily changing its many hues and colours; and while some dark wood would suddenly deepen in gloom, lo! beside it, some hitherto unperceived corn-field would as suddenly burst out in a gleam of yellow, burning like gold in the clear light.

So still it was on this quiet Sunday morning, that she could hear the "click" of a grasshopper on the warm gravel outside, and the hum of a passing bee as it buried itself in one of the white roses, and then flew on. As she looked away to the south, it seemed to her she could hear more. Her eyes refused to recognise the beautiful scene before her, and saw another which was very different. Was not that the plashing of the sea on the sunny coast of France? Was not that the sound of chanting in the small chapel at Le Croisic, out there at the point of land that runs into the sea above the estuary of the Loire? Her mental vision followed

the line of coast running inward—passing the quaint houses and the great building yards of St. Nazaire —and then, as she followed the course of the broad blue river, she came to her own home, high up on the bank, overlooking the islands on the stream and the lower land and green woods beyond.

"If I had a pair of wings," she said, with a laugh, "I would fly ayvay." She had determined she would always speak English now, even to herself.

She went to her piano and sat down and began to sing the old and simple air that she had sung when she left her southern home. She sang of "Normandie, ma Normandie;" and the sensitive thrill of a rich and soft contralto voice lent a singular pathos to the air, although she seemed to sing carelessly, and, indeed, from lightness of heart. Now it happened that the Whaup was passing the foot of the stair leading up to her room. At first he could not believe his ears that any one was actually singing a profane song on the Sabbath morning; but no sooner had he heard "O Normandie, ma Normandie!" than he flew up the stairs, three steps at a bound, to stop such wickedness.

She did not sing loudly, but he thought he had never heard such singing. He paused for a moment at the top of the stair. He listened, and suc-

cumbed to the temptress. The peculiar penetrating *timbre* of the deep contralto voice pierced him and fixed him there, so that he forgot all about his well-meant interference. He listened breathlessly, and with a certain amount of awe, as if it had been vouchsafed to him to hear the singing of angels. He remembered no more that it was sinful; and when the girl ceased singing, it seemed to him there was a terrible void in the silence, which was almost misery.

Presently her fingers touched the keys again. What was this now that filled the air with a melody which had a strange distance and unearthliness about it? She had begun to play Mozart's sonata in A sharp, and was playing it carelessly enough; but the Whaup had never heard anything like it before. It seemed to him to open with the sad stateliness of a march, and he could almost hear in it the tread of aërial hosts; and then there was a suggestion of triumph and joy, falling back into that plaintive and measured cadence. It was full of dreams and mystery to him; he knew no longer that he was in a Scotch Manse. But when the girl inside the room broke into the rapidity of the first variation, and was indeed provoked into giving some attention to her playing, and lending some sharpness to her execution, he was recalled to him-

self. He had been deluded by the devil. He would no longer permit this thing to go on unchecked. He would at once have opened the door and charged her to desist, but from a sneaking hope that she might play something more intelligible to him than these variations, which he regarded as impudent and paganish—the original melody playing hide-and-seek with you in a demoniac fashion, and laughing at you from behind a corner, when you thought you had secured it. He was lingering in this uncertain way when Leezibeth dashed up the stairs. She saw him standing there, listening, and threw a glance of contempt at him. She banged the door open, and advanced into the room.

"Preserve us a', lassie, do ye ken what ye're doing? Do ye no ken that this is the Sabbath, and that you're in a respectable house?"

The girl turned round with more wonder than alarm in her face.

"Is it not right to play music on Sunday?"

"Sunday! Sunday!" exclaimed Leezibeth, who was nearly choking, partly from excitement and partly from having rushed upstairs; "your heathenish gibberish accords weel wi' sic conduct. There is nae Sunday for us. We are no worshippers o' Bel and the Draugon; and dinna ye tell me that the

dochter o' the minister's brither doesna ken that it is naething less than heathenish to turn a sober and respectable house into a Babel o' a theatre on a Sabbath morning——"

At this moment the Whaup made his appearance, with his eyes aflame.

"Plenty, plenty, Leezibeth!" said he, standing out in the middle of the floor.

"Ma certes," said Leezibeth, turning on her new enemy, "and this is a pretty pass! Is there to be nae order in the house because ye are a' won ower by a smooth face and a pretty pair o' een? Is the Manse to be tumbled tapsalteery, and made a by-word o' because o' a foreign hussy?"

"Leezibeth," said the Whaup, "as sure's death, if ye say another word to my cousin, ye'll gang fleein' down that stair quicker than ever ye came up. Do ye hear?"

Leezibeth threw up her hands, and went away. The Manse would soon be no longer fit for a respectable woman to live in. Singing, and dancing, and play-acting on the Sabbath morning—after all, Andrew was right. It would have been a merciful dispensation if the boat that brought this Jezebel to the country had foundered in sight of its shores.

Then the Whaup turned to Coquette. "Look here," said he, "I don't mean to get into trouble

more nor I can help. Leezibeth is an authority in the Manse, and ye'll hae to make friends wi' her. Don't you imagine you can play music here or do what ye like on the Sabbath—for you'll have to be like the rest—gudeness gracious! what are ye crying for?"

"I do not know," she said, turning her head aside. "I thank you for your kindness to me."

"Oh," said he, with a tremendous flush of red to his face—for her tears had made him valiant—"is that all? Look here, you can depend on me. When you get into trouble, send for me. If any man or woman in Airlie says a word to you, by jingo! I'll punch their head!"

With that she turned and looked at him with laughter like sunshine struggling through the tears in her eyes.

"Is it English—*ponche sare hade?*"

"Not as you pronounce it," he said, coolly. "But as I should show them, if they interfered wi' you, it's very good English, and Scotch, and Irish all put together."

On Sunday morning Mr. Cassilis had his breakfast by himself in his study. The family had theirs in the ordinary breakfast room, Leezibeth presiding. It was during this meal that Coquette began for the first time to realise the fact that there existed be-

tween her and the people around her some terrible and inexplicable difference which shut her out from them. Leezibeth was cold and distant to her. The boys, all except the Whaup, who manfully took her part, looked curiously at her. And with her peculiar sensitiveness to outward impressions, she began to ask herself if there was not some cause for this suspicion on their part. Perhaps she was, unknown to herself, more wicked than others. Perhaps her ignorance—as in this matter of music, which she had always regarded as harmless—had blinded her to the fact that there was something more demanded of her than the simple, and innocent, and joyous life she believed herself to have led. These doubts and anxieties grew in proportion to their vagueness. Was she, after all, a dangerous person to have come among these religious people? Andrew would have been rejoiced to know of these agitating thoughts: she was awakening to a sense of wretchedness and sin.

Scarcely was breakfast over than a message was brought that Mr. Cassilis desired to see his niece privately. Coquette rose up, very pale. Was it now that she was to have explained to her the measure of her own godlessness, that seemed to be a barrier between her and the people among whom she was to live?

She went to the door of the study and paused there, with her heart beating. Already she felt like a leper that stood at the gates, and was afraid to talk to any passer-by for fear of a cruel repulse. She opened the door, with downcast look, and entered. Her agitation prevented her from speaking. And then, having raised her eyes, and seeing before her the tall, grey-haired Minister seated in his chair, she suddenly went forward to him, and flung herself at his feet, bursting into a wild fit of weeping, and burying her face in his knees. In broken speech, interrupted by wild sobbing and tears, she implored him to deal gently with her if she had done wrong.

"I do not know," she said, "I do not know. I do not mean to do wrong. I will do what you tell me—but I am all alone here—and I cannot live if you are angry with me. I will go away, if you like —perhaps it will be better if I go away, and not vex you any more."

"But you have not vexed me, my lassie—you have done no wrong that I know of," he said, putting his hand on her head. "What is all this? What does it mean?"

She looked up to see whether the expression of his face corresponded with the kindness of his voice. She saw there nothing but kindliness in the rugged

grey lines, and the ordinary sternness of the deep-set eyes was replaced by a profound pity.

"I cannot tell you in English—in French I could," she said. "They speak to me as if I was different from them, and wicked, and I do not know in what. I thought you wished to reproach me. I could not bear that. If I do wrong without knowing, I will do better if you will tell me—but I cannot live all by myself, and think that I am wicked, and not know. If it is wrong to play music, I will not play any more music. I will ask Lissiebess to pardon me my illness of this morning, which I did not know at all."

The Minister smiled.

"So you have been playing music this morning, and Leezibeth has stopped you. I hope she was not to blame in her speech, for to her it would seem very heinous to hear profane music on the Sabbath. Indeed, we all of us in Scotland consider that the Sabbath should be devoted to meditation and worship, not to idleness or amusement; and ye will doubtless come to consider it no great hardship to shut your piano one day out o' the seven. But I sent for ye this morning wi' quite another purpose than to scold ye for having fallen through ignorance into a fault, of which, indeed, I knew nothing."

He now began to unfold to her the serious

perplexity which had been caused him by the fact of her having been brought up a Roman Catholic. On the one hand, he had a sacred duty to perform to her as being almost her sole surviving relation; but on the other hand, was he justified in supplanting with another faith that faith in which her mother had desired her to remain? The Minister had been seriously troubled about this matter, and wished to have it settled before he permitted her to go to church with the rest of his family. He was a scrupulously conscientious man. They used to say of him in Airlie that if Satan, in arguing with him, were to fall into a trap, Mr. Cassilis would scorn to take advantage of any mere slip of the tongue—a piece of rectitude not invariably met with in religious disputes. When, therefore, the Minister saw placed in his hands a willing convert, he would not accept of the conversion without explaining to her all the bearings of the case, and pointing out to her clearly what she was doing.

Coquette solved the difficulty in a second.

"If mamma were here," she said, "she would go at once to your church. It never mattered to us—the church. The difference—or is it differation you do say in English?—was nothing to us; and papa did not mind. I will go to your church, and you will tell me all what it is right. I will soon know

all your religion," she added, more cheerfully "and I will sing those dreadful slow tunes which papa used to sing—to make mamma laugh."

"My brother might have been better employed," said the Minister, with a frown; but Coquette ran away, light-hearted, to dress herself to go with the others.

The Whaup was a head taller when he issued out of the Manse, by the side of his new cousin, to go down to the little church. He was her protector. He snubbed the other boys. To one of them—Wattie the sneak—he had administered a sharp cuff on the side of the head, when the latter, on Coquette being summoned into the study, remarked confidentially, "She's gaun to get her licks;" and now, when the young lady had come out in all the snowy brightness of her light summer costume, Wattie revenged himself by murmuring to his companions—

"Doesna she look like a play-actress?"

So the small procession passed along the rough moorland road until they drew near the little grey church and its graveyard of rude stones. Towards this point converged the scattered twos and threes now visible across the moor and down in the village—old men and women, young men and maidens all in their best Sunday "braws." The dissonant

bell was sounding harshly; and the boys, before going into the gloomy little building, threw a last and wistful glance over the broad moor, where the bronzed and the yellow butterflies were fluttering in the sunlight, and the bees drowsily humming in the heather.

They entered. Every one stared at Coquette, as they had stared at her outside. The boys could not understand the easy self-composure with which she followed the Whaup down between the small wooden benches, and took her place in the Minister's pew. There was no confusion or embarrassment in her manner on meeting the eyes of the lot of strangers.

"She's no feared," said Wattie to his neighbour.

When Coquette had taken her seat, she knelt down and covered her face with her hands. The Whaup touched her arm quickly.

"Ye maunna do that," said he, looking round anxiously to see whether any of the congregation had witnessed this piece of Romish superstition.

That look round dashed from his lips the cup of pleasure he had been drinking. Looking at both himself and Coquette, he met the eyes of Lord Earlshope; and the congregation had not seen anything of Coquette's kneeling, for they had turned

from her to gaze on the no less startling phenomenon of Lord Earlshope occupying his family pew, in which he had not been seen for many years.

CHAPTER IV.

An unexpected Visitor.

COQUETTE did not observe the presence of Lord Earlshope for some time. She was much engaged in the service, which was quite new to her. First of all, the Minister rose in his pulpit and read out a psalm; and then, under him, the precentor rose, and begun, all by himself, to lead off the singing in a strong harsh voice, which had but little music in it. The tune was "Drumclog;" and as Coquette listened, she mentally grouped its fine and impressive melody with chords, and thought of the wonderful strength and sweetness that Mendelssohn could have imparted to that bare skeleton of an air. The people groaned rather than sung—there was not even an attempt at part-singing. The men merely followed the air an octave lower, except when they struck into quite a different key, and produced such dissonances as are indescribable. If the use of the piano were not entirely proscribed, she promised to herself that she would show the

Whaup next morning the true character of that simple and noble air which was being so cruelly ill-treated.

There followed a long extempore prayer, and another psalm—sung to the plaintive "Coleshill"—and then there came the sermon. She tried hard to understand it, but she could not. It was an earnest and powerful appeal; but it was so clothed in the imagery of the Jewish prophets—so full of the technical phrases of the Scotch preachers—that she could not follow it. Her English had been chiefly gathered from the free and easy conversation of her father, and even that had been modified by the foreign pronunciation of her mother; so that such phrases as "the fulfilment of the covenant," "girding up the loins," "awakening unto grace," and so forth, conveyed no meaning to her whatever. In spite of her best endeavours she found herself dreaming of the Loire—of St. Nazaire, of Guérande, of the salt plains that lie between that town and Le Croisic, and of the Breton peasants in their white *bragous-bras* and wide hats, making their pilgrimages to the church of Notre Dame de Murier.

The sight of Lord Earlshope had made the Whaup both savage and wicked. He proposed to Wattie to play "Neevie, neevie, nick-nack"—an

offer which Wattie looked upon as the direct instigation of the devil, and refused accordingly.

When, at last, Coquette caught the eyes of Lord Earlshope fixed upon her, she was surprised to see him so intently regarding her. There was something wistful, too, in his look; his face bearing an expression of seriousness she did not expect to find in it. During the brief period in which he talked to her he had left upon her the impression of his being merely a light-hearted young man, who had winning ways, and a good deal of self-confidence. But the fact is, she had paid no very great attention to him, and even now was not disposed to look upon his fixed gaze as anything beyond a mere accident. She turned her eyes aside; tried once more to follow the sermon; and again subsided into dreaming of Bourg de Batz and the square pools of the salt plains, with the ancient walls of Guérande filling up the horizon of her imagination.

When the service was over, and they had got outside, the Whaup bundled them off on the road towards the Manse with but little ceremony, taking care that Coquette should be in front.

"What has changed you?" she said, in some surprise. "I did think you were good friends with me on coming to the church."

"Never mind," he said, abruptly; and then he added, sharply, "Did you see Lord Earlshope there?"

"Yes, I did see him."

"What business had he there?"

"People go not to the church for business," she said, with a laugh.

"He has not been in that pew for years," said the Whaup, gloomily.

"Perhaps he is becoming a good man," she said, lightly, making a careless effort to catch a butterfly that fluttered before her face.

"He has plenty to alter then," said the Whaup, bitterly.

"*Quel drôle de grand enfant!* Wattie," she said, turning to the Whaup's brother, "will you run with me to the house?"

She held out her hand.

"No, I'll no," said Wattie. "Ye are a Roman, and can get absolution for a' the ill ye dae."

"I will, an' ye like," said the youngest of the brothers, Dougal, timidly.

"Come along, then!"

She took his hand, and, before Leezibeth or Andrew could interfere, they were fleeing along the rough road towards the Manse, far in front of the others. Dougal, young as he was, was a swift

runner; but the foreign lassie beat him, and was evidently helping him. All at once Dougal was seen to stumble and roll forward. Coquette made a desperate effort to save him, but in vain; and while he fell prone upon the ground, she was brought nearly on her knees. The little fellow got up, looking sadly at one of his hands, which was badly scratched with the gravel. He looked at her, too, dumbly; clenching his lips to keep himself from crying, although the tears would gather in his eyes. In an instant she had overwhelmed him with pitying caresses, and soft French phrases of endearment, while she carefully smoothed his torn hand with her handkerchief.

"You will come with me to my room, and I will heal it for you."

She carried him off before the others had arrived and washed his hand, and put cold cream on it, and gave him a whole box of French chocolate—a dainty which he had never seen before, but which he speedily appreciated. Then she said,

"Come along, now, and I will sing you something. Alas! no, I must not open my piano any more."

It was the first time Dougal had ever heard anybody say "alas!"—a word which Coquette had picked up from her English books. He began to

distrust all this kindness and all these fascinating ways. What Coquette knew of English was more English than Scotch in pronunciation. Now, everybody in Airlie was aware of the curious fact that all actors and public singers, and such people, generally, as live by their wits, were English; and an English accent was therefore in itself suspicious. If this young lady in the white muslin dress, with the yellow ribbons in her black hair, was not actually French she was English, which was only a shade less deplorable. Dougal accepted the brown and sweet little balls of chocolate with some compunction, and hoped he was doing no mortal sin in eating them.

After the "interval," as it was technically called, they had to go to church again, and here Coquette's patience nearly gave way. Nor was the situation rendered less grievous by the Whaup informing her severely that in Airlie there was no such thing as idle walking about on the Sabbath—that the whole of the afternoon she would not even be permitted to go into the garden, but would have to sit indoors and read a "good book." The Whaup was not ill-pleased to have to convey this information: he fancied Lord Earlshope might be prowling about.

There was a "tea dinner" at four o'clock, consisting exclusively of cold meats, with tea added.

Thereafter, the whole family sat down in solemn silence to their books—the list being the Bible, the Shorter and Longer Catechisms, Hutcheson's Exposition, Dr. Spurstow on the Promise, the Christian's Charter, Bishop Downham on the Covenant of Grace (these last "printed for *Ralph Smith*, at the *Bible* in *Cornhill*"), and Josephus. By this copy of Josephus there hangs a tale.

Dougal, remembering that business of the chocolate, came over to Coquette, and whispered—

"If ye are freends wi' the Whaup, he'll show ye the third vollum o' Josephus."

Indeed, the boys manifested the most lively curiosity when the Whaup appeared bearing the third volume of Josephus in his hand. They seemed to forget the sunlight outside, and the fresh air of the moor, in watching this treasure. The Whaup sat down at the table—the Minister was seated at the upper end of the room, in his arm-chair—and the third volume of Josephus was opened.

Coquette perceived that some mystery was abroad. The boys drew more and more near to the Whaup, and were apparently more anxious to see the third volume of Josephus than anything else. She observed also that the Whaup, keeping the board of the volume up, never seemed to turn over any leaves.

She, too, overcome by feminine curiosity, drew near. The Whaup looked at her—suspiciously at first, then he seemed to relent.

"Have ye read Josephus?" he said aloud to her.

"No," said Coquette.

"It is a most valuable work," said the Minister from the upper end of the room (the Whaup started), "as giving corroboration to the sacred writings from one who was not an advocate of the truth."

Coquette moved her chair in to the table. The Whaup carefully placed the volume before her. She looked at it, and beheld—two white mice!

The mystery was solved. The Whaup had daringly cut out the body of the volume, leaving the boards and a margin of the leaves all round. In the hole thus formed reposed two white mice, in the feeding and petting of which he spent the whole Sunday afternoon, when he was supposed to be reading diligently. No wonder the boys were anxious to see the third volume of Josephus; and when any one of them had done a particular favour to the Whaup, he was allowed to have half an hour of the valuable book. There were also two or three leaves left in front; so that, when any dangerous person passed, these leaves could be shut down over the cage of the mice.

They were thus engaged when Leezibeth suddenly opened the door, and said—

"Lord Earlshope would speak wi' ye sir."

Astonishment was depicted on every countenance. From time immemorial no visitor had dared to invade the sanctity of Airlie Manse on a Sabbath afternoon.

"Show him into my study, Leezibeth," said the Minister.

"By no means," said his Lordship, entering, "I would not disturb you, Mr. Cassilis, on any account. I have merely called in to say a passing word to you, although I know it is not good manners in Airlie to pay visits on Sunday."

"Your Lordship is doubtless aware," returned Mr. Cassilis, gravely, "that it is not the consideration of good manners gars us keep the Sabbath inviolate from customs which on other days are lawful and praiseworthy."

"I know, I know," said the young gentleman, good-naturedly, and taking so little notice of the hint as to appropriate a chair, "but you must blame my English education if I fall short. Indeed, it struck me this morning that I have of late been rather remiss in attending to my duties, and I made a sort of resolve to do better. You would see I was at church to-day."

"You could not have been in a more fitting place," said the Minister.

Mr. Cassilis, despite the fact that he was talking to the patron of the living—Lord Earlshope's father had presented him to the parish of Airlie—was not disposed to be too gracious to this young man, whose manner of conduct, although in no way openly sinful, had been a scandal to the neighbourhood.

"He'll have a heavy reckonin' to settle i' the next worl'," Andrew used to say, "be he lord or no lord. What think ye, sirs, o' a young man that reads licht books and smokes cigaurs frae the rising o' the sun even till the ganging doon o' the same; and roams about on the Lord's day breaking in a wheen pointers?"

The boys looked on this visit of Lord Earlshope as a blessed relief from the monotony of the Sunday afternoon; and while they kept their eyes steadily directed on their books, listened eagerly to what he had to say. This amusement did not last long. His Lordship—scarcely taking any notice of Coquette in his talk, though he sometimes looked at her by chance—spoke chiefly of some repairs in the church which he was willing to aid with a subscription; and, having thus pleased the Minister,

mentioned that Earlshope itself had been undergoing repairs and redecoration.

"And I have no neighbours but yourselves, Mr. Cassilis, to see our new grandeur. Will you not pay Earlshope a visit? What do you say to coming over, the whole of you, to-morrow forenoon, and seeing what I have done? I dare say Mrs. Graham will be able to get some refreshment for you; and I should like your niece—whom I had the pleasure of seeing on her way here—to give me her opinion about an organ sent me from abroad. What do you say? I am sure the boys will enjoy a holiday in the grounds, and be able to find amusement for themselves."

If the Whaup dared to have spoken, he would have refused in indignant terms. The other boys were delighted with the prospect—although they were still supposed to be reading. Coquette merely looked at Mr. Cassilis, apparently without much interest, awaiting his answer.

Mr. Cassilis replied, in grave and dignified terms of courtesy, that he would be proud to avail himself of his Lordship's invitation; and added that he hoped this re-establishment of the relations which had existed between Earlshope and the Manse in the time of his Lordship's father meant that he, the present Lord Earlshope, intended to come oftener

to church than had been his wont of late. The hint was conveyed in very plain language. The young gentleman, however, took it in good part, and speedily bade them good evening. He bowed to Coquette as he passed her, and she returned his obeisance, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

CHAPTER V.

Coquette's Music.

WHAT was this great rushing and whistling noise that filled the girl's ears as the light of the morning —entering by a small window which had no sort of blind or shutter—fell on her face and opened her confused eyes to its glare? She had been dreaming of Earlshope. Dreams are but *rechauffées* of past experiences; and this ghostly Earlshope that she visited in her sleep was a French Earlshope. The broad blue Loire ran down a valley in front of it. There were hills for a background which had long terraces of vines on them. From the windows she could see the steamers—mere dots with a long serpent trail of smoke behind them—creep into the haven of St. Nazaire; and far over the sea lay the calm summer stillness of a southern sky.

She awoke to find herself in Scotland. The Manse shook in the wind. There was a roaring of rain on the slates and the window panes, and a

hissing outside of the deluge that was pouring a red stream down the moorland road. Fierce gusts from the south-west flew about the house, and howled in the chimney overhead; and great grey masses of cloud, riven by the hurricane, came up from over the sea and swept across the moor. The room was cold and damp. When she had got up and partly dressed, she went to the window. Along the horizon there was a thin black line, dull as lead, which was all that was visible of the sea. The mountains of Arran had entirely disappeared, and in their place was a wall of grey vapour. Flying before the blast came huge volumes of smoke-like cloud, and every now and again their lower edges would be torn down by the wind and thrown upon the moor in heavy, slanting torrents of rain; while there was a sound of rushing streams everywhere, and the trees and shrubs of the garden stood bent and dark in the gleaming wet.

"No Earlshope for ye to-day," said the Whaup, with ill-disguised glee, when she went down stairs to breakfast.

"I am not sorry. What a dreadful chill country!" said Coquette, who was trembling with cold.

"Would you like a fire?" said the Whaup, eagerly.

"A fire, indeed!" cried Leezibeth, as she entered

with the tray. "A fire in the middle o' summer! We have na been brought up to sic luxuries in this pairt o' the country."

"I am not very cold," said Coquette, sitting down in a corner, and trying to keep herself from shivering.

The Whaup walked out of the room. He was too angry to speak. He looked once at Leezibeth on going out, and there was a blaze of anger in his eyes.

The Minister came in to breakfast, and they all sat down—all but the Whaup.

"Where is Thomas?" said Mr. Cassilis.

The reply was a shrill scream from Leezibeth, who was apparently at the door. At this moment a wild crackling and sputtering of fire was heard overhead, and as everybody rushed to the passage, dense volumes of smoke came rolling down the stairs, blown by the currents above. Leezibeth had flown up stairs on first perceiving this smell of burning. There, in Coquette's parlour, she caught sight of the Whaup working like a demon within clouds of heavy and pungent smoke which had filled the room, blown outwards by the fierce currents coming down the chimney. With another cry of alarm Leezibeth darted into the nearest bedroom, and brought out a ewer of water, which she dis-

charged at the blazing mass of newspapers and lumps of wood that the Whaup had crammed into the small grate.

"Would ye set fire to the house? Would ye set fire to the house?" she cried—and, indeed, it looked as if the house were on fire.

"Yes, I would," shouted the demon in the smoke, "rather than kill anybody wi' cold."

"Oh, it's that lassie—it's that lassie," cried Leezibeth, "that'll be the ruin o' us a'."

When assistance came, and the fire was finally subdued, both the Whaup and Leezibeth were spectacles to have awakened the ridicule of gods and men. The effect of the deluge of water had been to send up a cloud of dust and ashes with the smoke; and their respective faces were tattooed so that even Mr. Cassilis—for the first time these many years—burst into a fit of laughter. Even Wattie laughed, seeing which, the Whaup charged at him, caught him by the waist, and carried him bodily down stairs and out through the rain to the yard, where he made him work the iron handle of the pump. When the Whaup made his appearance at the breakfast table he was clean; but both himself and his brother were rather damp.

Mr. Cassilis severely reprimanded his eldest son; but he ordered Leezibeth to light a fire in Miss

Cassilis' room nevertheless. The wind had somewhat abated, and the clouds had gathered for a steady downpour. Leezibeth went to her appointed task with bitterness of heart, but she comforted herself with texts. As she stuffed the unconsumed remnants of the Whaup's bonfire into the grate, she uttered a denunciation of the luxury and idleness which were appearing for the first time in this godly house.

"But we," she muttered to herself, "who are the poor o' this world, rich in faith, and heirs o' the kingdom, maun bide and suffer. We maun e'en be the servants o' such as this woman that has come amongst us—such as lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves wi' the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

Yet even these consolations did not quite allay the irritation of her mind; for a big tom cat that belonged to the house having approached her elbow too confidently, suddenly received a "skelp" that sent him flying across the room and down the

stairs as if the spirits of a legion of dogs were pursuing him.

Airlie Manse was destined that day to be given up to the sound of the viol and godless rejoicings. All thought of getting to Earlshope was abandoned; and shortly after breakfast Coquette invited Mr. Cassilis and the boys to her sitting-room, promising to play something for them. Custom made the Minister hesitate for a moment. Was not dance music very near dancing, which he regarded as a profane and dangerous amusement?

"I wish to play for you—what you call it?—the tune of the church yesterday, as it should be sung Will you hear it from me?"

No objection could be taken to sacred music. The Minister led the way to the room, and the boys sat down silently, looking round with curiosity and awe upon the strange bits of foreign adornment and luxury which Coquette had already placed about the room. The fire was burning brightly, the rain battering on the panes outside. Coquette sat down to the piano.

The Minister did not know at first that he was listening to the old and familiar air of "Drumclog." It seemed to him the cry of a great supplication—sad, yearning, and distant, as if it came from a far moor half hidden in mist. It sounded like the

softened and various voices of a great multitude made harmonious and pathetic by distance. But when she smote firmer chords, and with a resonant and powerful bass, let the clear treble ring out triumphantly, he recognised "Drumclog." It was a song of victory now—the war cry of a host moved by intense religious enthusiasm—there was a joyous thanksgiving in it, and the clear voices of women and children. It seemed to him to represent a tumult of rejoicing—set in measured and modulated music—that rose like one sweet, strong voice. Then again the chords were softened, and the air changed to a wail. He could almost see the far moor, and the dead lying on it, with women wringing their hands, and yet thanking God for the victory.

"It is wonderfu', wonderfu'," he said, when Coquette had ceased playing, "the power o' a dumb instrument to speak such strange things."

He was surprised to find that this carnal invention of music had awoke such profound emotion within him. He waited to see if the girl herself were affected as she had affected him; but Coquette turned round and said, lightly, "It is a good air, but your church people they do not sing it. They groan, groan, groan all the same air—no counter singing, no music."

"But you would make any tune, however bad,

sound well," said the Whaup, warmly. "To every one note you give four or five other notes, all in harmony. No wonder it sounds well. It is no test. Play us some of your foreign music, that we may compare it."

The boys looked at the Whaup with astonishment: he was becoming an orator.

So she played them the *Cujus animam*, and for the first time in its history the Manse of Airlie was flooded with that sonorous and massive music that has entranced the hearts of multitudes. She played them the mystic melodies of the *Hochzeitmarsch*, and they thought that these also were the expression of a sublime devotional exaltation. Indeed, the boys regarded those pieces with something of awe and fear. There was an unholy smack of organ playing and Romanism about Coquette's performances. Had she not transformed the decent and sober tune of "Drumclog" into a mass, or chant, or some such vague portion of Catholic ordinances? Wattie was in possession of an ingenious little book on "Various Forms of Idolatry;" and—the first plate representing the burning at the stake of a "Popish witch,"—he had pointed out to his brothers that the black and profuse hair of the young woman in the flames very much resembled the hair of Coquette. It was but a suggestion, yet

Rabbie, another of the brothers, expressed the belief that there were witches in these days also, that they were emissaries of the "deevil," and that it behoved every one who wished to save his soul to guard against these fiends in disguise, and, above all, never to repeat any charm after them towards twelve of the night.

Coquette rose from the piano.

"Who is going to play for me now?" she said, looking at the boys.

A loud guffaw ran down the line of them—the notion of a boy being able to play on the piano was irresistibly ludicrous.

"Have you not learned at the school?" she asked. "You must know some pieces to play."

"Frenchmen *may* learn to play the piano," said the Whaup, with an air of calm superiority, "but men in this country have something else to do."

"What is it you do?" said Coquette, simply, having quite misunderstood the remark. "You play not the piano: is it the violin—the—the flute—one learns here at the school?"

"We dinna learn music at the schule, ye gowk," said one of the boys.

"No, nor manners either," said the Whaup, firing up at the last word.

At this juncture the Minister gravely thanked

Coquette for the pleasure her music had given him, and left the room. No sooner had he gone than the Whaup ordered his brothers to follow. They seemed inclined to show a spirit of insubordination.

"Out every one o' ye!" he cried, "or I'll leather ye in a lump!"

This somewhat dictatorial proceeding left him master of the field. So he turned to Coquette, and said—

"Ye said ye wanted to hear some music. There is but one musician in Airlie forbye the precentor. I mean Neil the Pensioner. He's a famous player on the fiddle—an out-and-out player, ye may take my word for't. Will I go and bring him to ye?"

"Perhaps he will not come."

"Oh, I'll bring him," said the Whaup, confidently.

"But it rains much," said Coquette, looking out on the disconsolate grey landscape, the dripping trees, and the lowering sky.

The Whaup laughed aloud, as his long legs carried him down the soft red road over the moor towards the village. He was no timid French creature, brought up under fair skies, that he should dread a temporary wetting. When he arrived at

Neil Lamont's cottage, the rain was running down his face, and he only blew it from his mouth and flung it from his fingers as he burst into the astonished Pensioner's presence, and bade him bundle up his fiddle and come along.

The Pensioner, as he was called, was a tall, spare old Highlandman, somewhat bent now, with scanty grey hair, and dazed, mild grey eyes, who had been at Waterloo. He represented at once the martial and musical aspects of Airlie. His narrative of the events of Waterloo had gradually, during many years, become more and more full of personal detail, until the old man at last firmly believed that he himself, in his own proper person, had witnessed the whole of the battle, and been one of the chief heroes of the hour. Napoleon, whom he had never seen, he described minutely—and the inhabitants of Airlie had learned to picture the rage and mortification visible on the face of the great commander when he saw Neil rushing on to victory over the dead bodies of three French grenadiers, whom the hardy Highlander had overcome. Waterloo had grown to be a great panorama for him; and he would unroll it at any moment, and name you every object and person in the picture.

He was the village musician, too, and was in

much request at balls, marriages, and other celebrations. The old man was singularly sensitive to music, and the wicked boys of the village used to practise on his weakness. When they saw the Pensioner out walking, they would begin to whistle some military march—"The Campbells are coming," "The Girl I left behind me," or "What's a' the steer, kimmer"—and you could see the Pensioner draw himself up, and go on with a military swagger, with his head erect. As for his own musical efforts, was there anybody in the west of Scotland who could play "The East Neuk o' Fife" with such tremendous "spunk?"

When the Pensioner was told that he had to play to a young French lady, he was a proud man.

"Ye will na sink," he observed to the Whaup in his curious jumble of Lowland and Highland pronunciation, "sat I will hurt sa leddy's feelins. No. Our prave regiments sent sa French fleein' at Waterloo; but I will speak jist nae word apoot it. I sweer till't—she will not even pe sinkin I wass at Waterloo."

Coquette received him graciously; the old Highlander was respectful, and yet dignified, in return. He gently declined to show her his medal—fearful

that the word "Waterloo" would pain her. He would not say a word about his soldiering—was it good manners to insult a beaten foe?

But he would play for her. He took his fiddle from its case, and sat down, and played her all manner of reels and strathspeys—but no military music.

"Wha will ken," he whispered significantly to the Whaup, "put sat she will have heard o' our victorious tunes? Na, na. Neil Lamont kens how to pehave himsel' to a leddy."

And, in return, Coquette sat down to the piano. There was one Scotch air—"Wha'll be King but Charlie"—which her father was particularly fond of. When she struck into that bold and stirring piece of music, with all the agencies of harmonious chords, the old Highlander sat at first apparently stupefied. He had never known the majesty and the power that could be lent to the tune which boys played on penny whistles. But as he became familiar with the rich and splendid sounds, he became more and more excited. He beat time with his foot; he slapped his thigh with his hand; he kept his head erect, and looked defiance. Suddenly he seemed to forget the presence of the Whaup, who was seated in a corner—he started to his feet, and began pacing up and down the room, waving

the bow of his violin as if it were a sword. And all at once Coquette heard behind her the shrill and quavering notes of an old man's voice—

"Come ower sa heather! come a' tagether!
Come Ronald, an' Tonald, an' a' tagether!"

and, when she turned round, the old Highlandman, as one possessed, was marching up and down the chamber, with his head high in the air, and tears running down his withered grey cheeks.

"*Thug thu braigh-ghill air na chualadh mi riamh*," he cried, as he sank shamefacedly into a chair. "I have never heard sa like o' sat not since sa day I will pe porn!"

CHAPTER VI.

Earlshope.

How sweet, and bright, and green looked the grounds of Earlshope on the next day, when Mr. Cassilis and Coquette drew near. The warm sun had come out again, and the air was fragrant with the scent of the wet trees. Masses of white cloud still came up from the south, sweeping over the dark, clear blue of the sky; and the peaks of Arran, set far amid the sea, were pale and faint in a haze of yellow light.

Coquette was merry-hearted. The sunshine seemed to please her as it pleased the butterflies and the bees that were again abroad. As she went down the moorland road, she laughed and chatted with the Minister, and was constantly, out of pure lightness of heart, breaking into merry exclamations in her native tongue—on which she would suddenly recall herself with a pout of impatience and resume her odd and quaint English talk.

The Whaup had been ill-tempered on setting

out; but the sunlight and the bright life around him thawed his sulkiness, and he became merely mischievous. His brothers perceived his mood, and kept out of his way. He was in the humour for rather rough practical jokes; and no one of them wished to be tripped up and sent into the red-coloured "burn" that still ran down between the moor and the road to the little stream in the hollow.

When they had passed the keeper's lodge, and gone under a winding avenue of trees, they came in sight of the big stone building and the bright green lawn in front of it. They also saw their host seated beside a stone lion, smoking a cigar, and watching the operations of a lad who, mounted on the pedestal of a statue of Venus, was busily engaged in giving that modest but scantily clad young woman a coating of white paint.

"Did you ever see anything so curious?" he said, when he had bade them welcome. "Look at the rude indifference with which he comes over her nose, and gives her a slap on the cheek, and tickles her neck with his brush! I have been wondering what she would do if she were alive—whether she would scream and run away, or rise up in indignant silence, or give him a sound box on the ears."

"If she were to come alive," said Coquette, "he would be made blind with fear, and she would fly up into the skies."

"*Et procul in tenuem ex oculis evanuit auram*," said the Minister, graciously, with a smile. He had not aired so much Latin for years.

They had a walk round the grounds, skirting the not very extensive park, before they turned into the garden. Here everything was heavy with perfume in the sweet, warm air. They went into the hothouses and vineries; and Lord Earlshope found a bunch of muscatel grapes ripe enough to be cut for Coquette. No sooner had she placed one between her lips than she cried out—

"Oh, how like to the vine! I have not tasted——"

She looked at the Minister, and hastily stopped her speech.

"You have not tasted muscatel grapes in this country," said Lord Earlshope coming to her relief; and he looked at her with a peculiar smile, as much as to say "I know you meant wine."

The boys preferring to remain in the garden (the Whaup walked off by himself into the park, under pretence of seeking a peculiar species of *Potentilla*), Lord Earlshope led his two principal guests back to the house, and proceeded to show

them its curiosities in the way of pictures, old armour, old furniture, and the like. Coquette got so familiarised to his voice and look that she forgot he was but a distant acquaintance. She did not know that she stared at him while he was talking, or that she spoke to him with a pleasant carelessness which was oddly out of keeping with the Minister's grave and formal courtesy. She was not even aware that she was taking note of his appearance; and that, after they had left, she would be able to recal every lineament in his face and every tone of his voice.

Lord Earlshope was a fair-haired, gentlemanly-looking young man of some twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age. He was rather over the middle height, slimly built, and inclined to lounge carelessly. The expression of his eyes, which were large, grey, and clear, varied singularly—at one time being full of a critical and somewhat cold scrutiny, and at other times pensive and distant. He said he had no politics and no prejudices—unless a very definite belief in "blood" could be considered a prejudice.

"It is no superstition with me," he said to the Minister, as the latter was examining a strange old family tree hung up in the library. "I merely think it imprudent for a man of good family to marry out

of his own class. I have seen the experiment made by some of my own acquaintances; and, as a rule, the result has been disastrous. The bad breeding comes out sooner or later. Look at the ——— family. The late Duke married in Paris a woman nobody had heard of. She was apparently a respectable sort of person—but you see that every one of the sons has gone to the dogs, and there isn't a tree belonging to the family. A man who inherits a historical name owes something to his forefathers, and has no right to risk the reputation of his family by humouring his own whims. I do not think I shall ever marry; for I am too poor to marry a woman of my own station, and too proud to marry a woman who may turn out to have inherited bad qualities from her ancestors."

Coquette came back at this moment from the book-shelves, with a large thin quarto in her hands.

"Look what I have found," she said. "A volume of curious old chants."

"It is treasure-trove," said Lord Earlshope. "I had no idea there was such a book in the place. Shall we go and try some of them? You know you promised to give me your opinion of the organ I have had fitted up."

"I did not promise it, but I will do it," said Coquette.

He led the way down stairs to the drawing-room, which they had not yet visited. The tall chamber-organ, a handsome and richly decorated instrument, stood in a recess in the middle of the long apartment, and therefore did not seem so cumbrous an appanage to a room as it might otherwise have done.

"The defect of the organ," said Lord Earlshope, as he placed the music for her, "is that the operation of blowing the bellows is performed in sight of the public. You see, I must fix in this handle, and work it while you are playing."

"You must get a screen," she said, "and put a servant there."

"While you are playing," he said, "I could not let anybody else assist you even in so rude a fashion."

Coquette laughed and sat down. Presently, the solemn tones of the organ were pealing out a rich and beautiful chant—full of the quaint and impressive harmonies which the monks of old had pondered over and elaborated. If Mr. Cassilis was troubled by a suspicion that this noble music was of distinctly Roman Catholic or idolatrous origin, that doubt became a certainty when, at the end of the chant, there came a long and wailing "Amen!" rolled out by the organ's deep voice.

"You play excellently—you must be familiar with organ playing," said Lord Earlshope. "It is not every one who knows the piano who can perform on an organ."

"At home the old *curé* used to let me play in the church," she said—with her eyes grown suddenly distant and sad. She had remembered that her home no longer lay away down there in the south, where life seemed so pleasant.

"Come," said Lord Earlshope, "I hear my henchman Sandy about to ring the bell for luncheon. Shall we go into the room at once, or wait for the boys?"

"They will have their luncheon off your fruit trees, I am afraid," said Mr. Cassilis.

Nevertheless, the boys were sent for, and arrived, looking rather afraid. The Whaup was not with them; no one knew whither he had gone.

Lord Earlshope's household was far from being an extensive one; and Mr. Cassilis' boys found themselves waited on by two maid-servants who were well known to them as having been made the subject of many tricks; while Sandy, his lordship's valet, butler, courier, and general factotum—a tall and redheaded Scotchman, who, by reason of his foreign travels, had acquired a profound contempt for everything in his own country—approached Miss

Cassilis with a lofty air, and, standing behind her at a great distance from the table, extended a bottle of Chablis so as to reach her glass.

"Miss Cassilis," said Lord Earlshope, "what wine will remind you most of the Loire?"

It had been her own thought, and she looked up with a quick and grateful smile.

"My father left me a fair assortment of Bordeaux wines——"

"But no *vin ordinaire*," she said, with another bright look.

"I must go myself to get you that," he said, laughing, "Sandy does not know how to manufacture it."

Before she could protest he had left the room, and in a few minutes he had returned with a bottle in his hand, and with the air of a conjuror on his face. He himself filled her glass, and Coquette drank a little of it.

"Ah!" she cried, clasping her hands, "I think I can hear old Nanette talking outside, and the river running underneath us; it is like being at home—as if I were at home again!"

She fondled the glass as if it were a magical talisman that had transported her over the sea, and would have to bring her back.

"I must taste some of that wizard wine," said

the Minister, with a humorous smile—and the boys stared with wonder to hear their father talking about drinking wine.

"Pray don't, Mr. Cassilis," said their host, with a laugh. "It is merely some new and rough claret to which I added a little water—the nearest approximation to *vin ordinaire* I could think of. Since your niece is so pleased with the Earlshope vintage, I think I must ask you to let me send her a supply to the Manse. It is quite impossible you can get it elsewhere, as I keep the recipe in my own hands."

"And this is French bread!" said Coquette, startled out of her good manners by perceiving before her a long, narrow, brown loaf.

"Have I been so fortunate as to create another surprise?" said Lord Earlshope. "I telegraphed for that bread to Glasgow, if I must tell you all my housekeeping secrets."

It soon became clear that the indolent young man, having nothing better to do, had laid his plans to get a thoroughly French repast prepared for Coquette. Every little dish that was offered her—the red mullet, the bit of fowl, the dry boiled beef and thick sauce, the plate of salad—was another wonder and another reminiscence of the south. Why, it was only a few days since she had arrived

in Scotland, and yet it seemed ages since she had sat down to such another pretty French breakfast as this practically was. She sipped her *vin ordinaire*, and toyed with the various dishes that were offered her—accepting all, and taking a little bit of each for the very pleasure of "thinking back"—with such evident delight that even Mr. Cassilis smiled benignantly. The boys at the Manse—like other boys in Scotland—had been taught that it was rather ignominious to experience or exhibit any enjoyment in the vulgar delights of eating and drinking; but surely in the pleased surprise with which Coquette regarded the French table around her, there was little of the sensuous satisfaction of the gourmand.

She was altogether delighted with this visit to Earlshope. As they went back to the Manse, she was in the most cheerful of moods, and fairly fascinated the grave Minister with her quaint, broken talk. She never ceased to speak of the place—of its grounds, and gardens, and books, and what not—even to the brightness of the atmosphere around it; until Mr. Cassilis asked her if she thought the sky was blue only over Earlshope.

"But I hope he will not send the wine—it was a—what you call it?—joke, was it not?" she said.

"A joke, of course," said Mr. Cassilis. "We are

very proud in this country, and do not take presents from rich people."

"But I am not of your country," she said, with a laugh. "If he sends his stupid *vin ordinaire*, he sends it to me; and I will not drink it—you shall drink it all. Did he say he is coming over to see you soon?"

"Well, no," replied the Minister; "but since the ice is broken, nothing is more likely."

The phrase about the ice puzzled Coquette much: when it had been explained to her, they had already reached the Manse. But where was the Whaup? Nobody had seen him.

CHAPTER VII.

The Crucifix.

"I AM going to sea," said the Whaup, suddenly presenting himself before Coquette. She looked up with her soft dark eyes, and said—

"Why you go to sea?"

"Because," said the Whaup—evidently casting about for an excuse—"because the men of this country should be a seafaring race, as their forefathers were. We cannot all be living in big towns, and becoming clerks. I am for a hardier life. I am sick of staying at home. I cannot bear this idling any more. I have been down to the coast, and when I smell the salt air, and see the waves coming tumbling on to the coast, I hate to turn my face inland."

There was a sort of shamefaced euthusiasm in the lad's manner; and Coquette, as she again looked up at him, perceived that, although he believed all that he had said, that was not the cause of his hasty determination. Yet the boy looked

every inch a sailor—the sun-brown hair thrown back from his handsome face, and the clear moorland light shining in his blue eyes.

"There is something else," said the girl. "Why you say nothing of all this before? Why you must wish to become a sailor all at once?"

"And, if I must tell you," said he, with a sudden fierceness, "I will. I don't choose to stay here to see what I know will happen. You are surprised? Perhaps. But you are a mere child. You have been brought up in a French convent, or some such place. You think everybody in the world is like yourself, and you make friends with anybody. You think they are all as good and as kind as yourself; and you are so light-hearted, you never stop to think or to suspect. Enough; you may go on your way, in spite of warning; but I will not remain here to see my family disgraced by your becoming the friend and companion of a man like Lord Earlshope."

He spoke warmly and indignantly, and the girl rather cowed before him, until he uttered the fatal word "disgrace."

"Disgrace!" she repeated, and a quick light sprang to her eyes. "I have disgraced no one, not any time in my life. I will choose my own friends, and I will not be suspicious. You are worse than

the woman here: she wants me to believe myself bad and wicked. Perhaps I am—I do not know—but I will not begin to suspect my friends of being bad. If he is so bad, why does your father go to his house?"

"My father is as simple as you are," said the Whaup, contemptuously.

"Then it is only you are suspicious? I did not think it of you."

She looked hurt and vexed, and a great compunction filled the heart of the Whaup.

"Look here," he said, firmly (and in much better English than was customary with him), "you are my cousin, and it is my business to warn you when you are likely to get into trouble. But don't imagine I'm going to persecute you. No. You may do as you like. Perhaps you are quite right. Perhaps it is only that I am suspicious. But, as you are my cousin, I don't wish to stand by and see what is likely to come, and so I am going off. The sea will suit me better than a college life, or a doctor's shop, or a pulpit."

Coquette rose from her seat, and began to walk up and down the room, in deep distress.

"I must go," she said; "it is I who must go away from here. I bring wretchedness when I come here—my friends are made miserable—it is my

fault. I should not have come. In France I was very happy—they used to call me the peacemaker at school—and all the people there were cheerful and kind. Here I am wicked—I do not know how—and the cause of contention and pain. Ah, why you go away because of me!" she suddenly exclaimed, as she took his hand, while tears started to her eyes. "It does not matter to me if I go—I am nobody; I have no home to break up. I can go away, and nobody be the worse."

"Perhaps it is the best thing you can do," he said, frankly. "But if you go, I will go with you—to take care of you."

Coquette laughed.

"You are incomprehensible," she said. "Why not take care of me here?"

"Will you give me that duty?" he asked, calmly.

"Yes," she said, with a bright smile, "you shall take care of me as much—as much as you can."

"Mind, it is no joke," said he. "If I resolve to take care of you, I will do it; and anybody interfering——"

He did not finish the sentence.

"You will fight for me?" she said, putting her hand on his arm, and leading him over to the

window. "Do you see those clouds away over the sea—how they come on, and on, and go away? These are the moods of a man—his promises—his intentions. But overhead do you see the blue sky? —that is the patience of a woman. Sometimes the clouds are dark—sometimes white—but the sky is always the same: is it not?"

"Hm!" said the Whaup, with a touch of scorn, "that is the romantic stuff they teach you at your French school, is it? It is very pretty, but it isn't true. A man has more patience and more steadfastness than a woman. What you meant was, I suppose, that whatever I might be to you, you would always be the same to me. Perhaps so! We shall see in a few years. But you will never find any difference in me—after any number of years—if you want somebody to take your part. You may remember what I say now afterwards."

"I think I could always trust you," she said, looking rather wistfully at him with those dark eyes that he had almost ceased to regard as foreign and strange. "You have been very good to me since I came here."

"And I have found out something new for you," he said, eagerly—so glad was he to fix and establish those amicable relations. "I hear you were pleased

because Lord Earlshope had French things for you to eat and drink?"

"Yes—I was pleased," she said, timidly, and looking down.

"But you don't know that there is a town close by here as like St. Nazaire as it can be: wouldna ye like to see that?"

"It is impossible," she said.

"Come and see," he replied.

Coquette very speedily discovered that the Whaup, refusing to accept of Lord Earlshope's invitation, had gone off by himself on a visit to Saltcoats; that he had fallen in with some sailors there; that he had begun talking with them of France and of the French seaports; and that one of the men had delighted him by saying that on one side the very town he was in resembled the old place at the mouth of the Loire. Of course Miss Coquette was in great anxiety to know where this favoured town was situated; and would at once have started off in quest of it.

"Let us go up to your parlour, and I will show it to you," said the Whaup.

So they went up stairs, and went to the window. It was getting towards the afternoon; and a warm light from the south-west lay over the fair yellow country, with its dark lines of hedge and copse, its

ruddy streaks of sand, and the distant glimmer of a river. Seaward there was a lowering which presaged a storm; and the black line of the Saltcoats houses fronted a plain of water which had a peculiar light shining along its surface.

"That is the town," said the Whaup, pointing with a calm air of pride to Saltcoats.

"I see nothing but a line of slates, and a church that seems to stand out in the sea," said Coquette, with some disappointment.

"But you must go near to see the old stone wall, and the houses built over it, and the pier and harbour."

"Ah, is it like that!" cried his companion, clasping her hands. "Is it like St. Nazaire? Are there boats? and an old church? and narrow streets? Oh, do lĕt us go there now!"

"Would you rather see that than drink Lord Earlshope's *vin ordinaire?*" said the Whaup, with a cold severity.

"Pah!" she cried, petulantly. "You do give me no peace with your Lord Earlshope. I wish you would fight him, not frighten me with such nonsense. I will believe you are jealous—you stupid boy. But if you will take me to St. Nazaire —to this place—I will forgive you everything, and

I will—what can I do for you!—I will kiss you—I will sew a handkerchief for you—anything."

The Whaup blushed very red, but frowned all the same.

"I will take you to Saltcoats," said he; "but we in this country don't like young ladies to be so free with their favours."

Coquette looked rather taken down, and only ventured to say, by way of submissive apology—

"You are my cousin, you know."

They were about to slip out of the house unperceived, when Leezibeth confronted them.

"Beg your pardon, Miss, but I would like to hae a word wi' ye," she said, in a determined tone, as she blocked up their way.

The Whaup began to look fierce.

"It is seventeen years come Michaelmas," said Leezibeth, in set and measured tones, "since I cam' to this house, and a pious and God-fearing house it has been, as naebody will gainsay. We who are but servants have done our pairt, I hope, to preserve its character; though in His sight there are nae servants and nae masters, for he poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, and yet setteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. I wouldna distinguish between master and servant

in the house; but when the master is blind to the things of his household, then it would ill become an honest servant, not afraid to give her testimony—"

"Leezibeth," said the Whaup, "your talk is like a crop o' grass after three months' rain. It's good for neither man nor beast, being but a *blash o' water*."

"As for ye, sir," retorted Leezibeth, angrily, "It was an ill day for ye that ye turned aside to dangle after an idle woman——"

"As sure as daith, Leezibeth," said the Whaup, in his strongest vernacular, "I'll gar ye gang skelpin' through the air like a splinter if ye dinna keep a civil tongue in your head."

"But what is it all about?" said Coquette, in deep dismay. "What have I done? Have I done any more wrong? I know not—you must tell me——"

"And is it not true, Miss," said Leezibeth, fixing her keen grey eye on the culprit, "that ye daur to keep a crucifix—the symbol of the woman that sits on seven hills—right over your head in your bed; and have introduced this polluting thing into an honest man's house, to work wickedness wi', and set a snare before our feet?"

"I do not know what you mean by seven hills,

or a woman," said Coquette, humbly. "I thought the cross was a symbol of all religion. If it annoys you, I will take it down—but my mother gave it to me—I cannot put it away altogether. I will hide it, if it annoys you; but I cannot—surely you will not ask me to part with it altogether——"

"You shall not part with it," said the Whaup, drawing himself up to his full height. "Let me see the man or woman who will touch that crucifix, though it had on it the woman o' Babylon herself!"

Leezibeth looked dazed for a moment. It was almost impossible that such words should have been uttered by the eldest son of the Minister, and for a moment she was inclined to disbelieve the testimony of her ears. Yet there before her stood the lad, tall, proud, handsome, and with his eyes burning and his teeth set. And there beside him stood the witch-woman who had wrought this perversion in him—who had come to work destruction in this quiet fold.

"I maun gang to the Minister," said Leezibeth, in despair. "Andrew and I maun settle this maitter, or else set out, in our auld age, for a new resting-place."

"And the sooner the Manse is rid of two cantankerous old idiots the better!" said the Whaup.

Leezibeth bestowed upon him a glance more of wonder and fear than of anger, and then went her way.

"Come!" said the Whaup to his companion. "We maun run for it, or we shall see no St. Nazaire this night."

Then Coquette, feeling very guilty, found herself stealing away from the Manse, led by the Minister's dare-devil son.

CHAPTER VIII.

Saltcoats.

THE two fugitives fled from the Manse, and crossed over the moor, and went down to the road leading to Saltcoats, in very diverse moods. The Whaup made light of the affair of the crucifix, and laughed at it as a good joke. Coquette was more thoughtful, and a trifle angry.

"This is too much," she said. "I am not in the habit to make enemies, and I cannot live like this—to be looked at as something very bad. If I do not know the feelings of your country about music, about Sunday, about religion—and it seems even a crime that I shall be cheerful and merry at times—why not tell me instead of scold? I will do what they want, but I will not be treated like a child. It is too much—this Leesiebess, and her harsh voice, and her scolding. It is too much—it is not bearable—it is a beastly shame!"

"A what?" said the Whaup.

"A beastly shame," she repeated, looking at him rather timidly.

The Whaup burst into a roar of laughter.

"Is it not right?" she said. "Papa did use to say that when he was indignant."

"Oh, it is intelligible enough," said the Whaup, "quite intelligible; but young ladies in this country do not say such things."

"I will remember," said Coquette, obediently.

The Whaup now proceeded to point out to his companion that, after all, there was a good deal to be said on the side of Leezibeth and her husband Andrew. Coquette, he said, had given them some cause to complain. The people of the Manse—whom Coquette took to represent the people of the country—were as kind-hearted as people anywhere else; but they had their customs, their beliefs, their prejudices, to which they clung tenaciously (just like people elsewhere); and, especially, in this matter of the crucifix, she had wounded their feelings by introducing into a Protestant Manse the emblem of a religion which they regarded with horror.

"But why is it that you regard any religion with horror?" said Coquette. "If it is religion, I do think it cannot be much wicked? If you do bring some Protestant emblem into my Catholic church I shall not grumble—I would say, we all believe in the one God—you may have a share of my pew—

you may pray just beside me—and we all look to the one Father who is kind to us."

The Whaup shook his head.

"That is a dangerous notion; but I cannot argue with you about it. Everything you say, everything you do, is somehow so natural, and fitting, and easy, that it seems it must be right. It is all a part of yourself, and all so perfect that nobody would have it altered, even if you were wrong."

"You do say that?" said Coquette, with a blush of pleasure.

"That sort of vague religious sentiment you talk of would be contemptible in anybody else, you know," said the Whaup, frankly—"it would show either weakness of reasoning or indifference—but in you it is something that makes people like you. Why, I have watched you again and again in the parlour at the Manse; and whether you let your hand rest on the table, or whether you look out of the window, or whether you come near the fire, you are always easy and graceful. It is a gift you have of making yourself, without knowing it, a picture. When you came out, I thought that grey woolly shawl round your shoulders was pretty; and now you have put it round your head, it is quite charming. You can't help it. And so you can't help that light and cheerful way of looking at religion, and

of being happy and contented, and of making yourself a pleasure to the people round about you."

Coquette began to laugh; and the Whaup came to an uncomfortable stop in the midst of his rapid enthusiasm.

"When you talk like that," she said, "I think I am again in France, I am so light-hearted. You, approve of me, then?" she added, timorously.

Approve of her! Was it possible that she could care for his approval? And in what language could he express his opinion of her save in the only poetry familiar to Airlie Manse? — "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." Only, this King's daughter was without companions—she was all alone—and the Whaup wondered how this pure and strange jewel came to be dropped in the centre of a Scotch moor.

The wind was blowing hard from the southwest —the region of rain. Arran was invisible; and in place of the misty peaks there was a great wall of leaden-grey sky, from the base of which came lines and lines of white waves, roaring in to the shore.

Coquette drew her thick grey plaid more closely around her, and pressed on, for St. Nazaire now lay underneath them—a dark line of houses between the sea and the land.

"What is that woman," said Coquette, looking along the road, "who stands with the flowers in her hand, and her hair flying? Is she mad? Is she Ophelia come to Scotland?"

Mad enough the girl looked; for as they came up to her, they found her a bonnie Scotch lassie of sixteen or seventeen, who sobbed at intervals, and kept casting tearful glances all around her. She carried in one hand her bonnet, in the other a bunch of flowers; and the wind that had scattered the flowers, and left but a remnant in her hand, had also unloosed her nut-brown hair, and blown it in tangled masses about her face and neck. She stood aside, in a shamed way, to let the strangers pass; but the Whaup stopped.

"What is the matter wi' ye, my lass?" said he.

"I had my shoon and stockings in my bundle," she said, while the tears welled up in her blue eyes, "and I hae dropped them out; and I canna gang back the road to look for them, for I maun be in Saltcoats afore kye-time."

"What does she say?" asked Coquette.

"She has only lost her shoes and stockings, that's all," said the Whaup.

"But it is bad enough for her, I dare say."

In an instant Coquette had out her purse—a dainty little Parisian thing, in mother-of-pearl, with filagree work round it—and taken therefrom two Napoleons.

"Here," she said, going forward to the girl, "you must not cry any more about that. Take my little present, and you will buy more shoes and more stockings for yourself."

The girl eyed the money with some dismay, and probably wondered if this was not a temptress who had suddenly appeared to offer her gold, and who spoke with a strange sound in her voice.

"Dinna be a sumph!" said the Whaup, who could talk broadly enough when occasion demanded. "Take the money the leddy offers ye, and thank her for't."

The girl accepted the foreign-looking coins, and seemed much distressed that—like the peasantry of Scotland in general—she did not know how to express the gratitude she felt. Her thanks were in her eyes, and these spoke very eloquently. But, just as her benefactors were moving on, a man came along the road with something dangling from

his hands. Great was the joy of the girl on perceiving that he had found her lost property; and, when he had come up and delivered the things to her, she advanced with the money to Coquette.

"Thank ye, mem," said she.

"Won't you keep the money, and buy something for your little brothers and sisters, if you have any?"

This offer was declined, with just an inkling of pride in the girl's manner; and the next instant she was hurrying to Saltcoats as fast as her bare feet could carry her.

Now, this incident had delayed the two runaways much longer than they suspected; and, when they had got down to Saltcoats, they were much later than they dreamed. Indeed, they never looked at the town clock in passing, so satisfied were they that they had plenty of time.

"This is not like St. Nazaire," said Coquette, decidedly.

"You have not seen it yet," returned the Whaup, just as confidently.

A few minutes afterwards Coquette and he stood upon the shore. The long bay of Saltcoats, sweeping round from the far promontory of Troon, fronted a heaving, tumbling mass of white-crested waves, that came rolling onward from under a great

leaden breadth of sky; and, as they gazed out on this wintry-looking sea, they had on their right hand the curve of the bay, ending in the grey stone wall of the town, which projected into the water, with here and there a crumbling old house peeping over it. The church spire rose above the tallest of the houses on the side of the land, and aided the perspective of the lines, which ran out to a point at the end of the wall—so much so that one would almost imagine the site of the building had been chosen by one who had studied the picturesque opportunities of the bay.

"It is St. Nazaire in winter!" cried Coquette, her voice half lost in the roar of the waves.

"Didn't I tell you," shouted the Whaup, triumphantly, who had never seen St. Nazaire, but only knew that, on this side, Saltcoats looked singularly like a little French walled town. "Now will you come and see the harbour?"

But she would not leave. She stood there, with her shawl fluttering in the fierce wind, and with her slight form scarcely able to withstand the force of the hurricane, looking out on the rushing white crests of the waves, on the black line of the town perched above the rocks and the ruddy sand, and on the lowering western sky, which seemed to be slowly advancing with its gloom. There was no

sign of life near them—not even a sailor on the watch, nor a ship running before the wind—nothing but the long and level shore, and the great wild mass of waves, which had a voice like thunder far out beyond the mere dashing on the beach.

"Imagine what it would be," she said, "to have one you loved out on that fearful sea, and to come down here at night to hear the savage message that the waves bring. It would make me mad. You will not go to sea?" she added suddenly, turning to him with an urgent pleading in her face and her voice.

"No—of course not," he said, looking strangely at her.

Was it possible, then, that this vague determination of his had lingered in her mind as a sort of threat? Did she care to have him remain near her?

"Come," said he, "we must hurry, if you mean to see the harbour and the old ruins at the point. Besides, I want you to rest for a minute or two at an inn here, and you shall see whether there is no *vin ordinaire* in the country except at Earlshope."

"Earlshope—Earlshope," she said. "Why do you talk always of Earlshope?"

The Whaup would not answer, but led her back through the town, and stopped on their way

to the harbour at the Saracen's Head. Here Coquette had a biscuit and a glass of claret, and was further delighted to perceive that the window of the room they were in looked out upon a very French-looking courtyard of stone, surrounded by a high wall which appeared to front the sea.

"It is St. Nazaire in winter," she repeated; "the grey stones, the windy sea, the chill air. Yet how dark it becomes!"

Indeed, when they had resumed their journey, and gone out to the point beyond the little harbour, on which stand what looked like the remains of an ancient fortress, the storm had waxed much more fierce. They passed through the ruins on to the rocks, and found themselves alone in front of the sea, which had now become of a lurid green. It was in fact, much lighter in colour than the gloomy sky above; and the grey green waves, tumbling in white could be seen for an immense distance under this black canopy of cloud. The wind whistled around them, and dashed the spray of the sea into their blinded eyes. The wildness of the scene—the roaring of wind and sea around—produced a strange excitement in the girl; and while she clung to the Whaup's arm to steady herself on the rocks, she laughed aloud in defiance of the storm. At this moment a glare of steel-blue light flashed

through the driving gloom in front of them; and almost simultaneously there was a rattle of thunder overhead, which reverberated among the Arran hills. Then came the rain, and they could hear the hissing of it on the sea before it reached them.

"Shall we make for the town?" cried the Whaup, "or shelter ourselves in the ruins?"

He had scarcely spoken when another wild glare burst before their eyes, and made them stagger back; while the rattle of the thunder seemed all round their ears.

"Are you hurt?" said Coquette, for her companion did not speak.

"I think not," said the Whaup, "but my arm tingles up to the elbow, and I can scarcely move it. This is close work. We must hide in the ruins, or you will be wet through."

They went inside the old building, and crept down and sat mute and expectant under Coquette's outstretched plaid. All around them was the roaring of the waves, with the howling of the gusts of wind and rain; and ever and anon the rough stone walls before them would be lit up by a flash of blue lightning, which stunned their eyes for several seconds.

"This is a punishment for our running away," said Coquette.

"Nonsense!" said the Whaup. "This storm will wreck many a boat; and it would be rather hard if a lot of sailors should be drowned merely to give us a drouking."

"What is that?"

"A wetting, such as we are likely to get. Indeed, I don't think there is much use in stopping here, for it will soon be so dark that we shall not see to gang along the rocks to the shore."

This consideration made them rise and leave at once; and sure enough it had grown very dark within the past half-hour. Night was rapidly approaching as they made their way through Saltcoats to gain the road to Airlie. Nor did the storm abate one jot of its fury; and long before they had begun to ascend towards the moorland country, the Whaup was as wet as though he had been lying in a river. Coquette's thick plaid saved her somewhat.

"What shall we do?" she said. "They will be very angry, and this time with reason."

"I shouldn't care whether they were angry or not," said the Whaup, "if only you were at home and in dry clothes."

"But you are wetter than I am."

"But I don't care," said the Whaup, although his teeth were chattering in his head.

So they struggled on, in the darkness, and wind, and driving rain, until it seemed to Coquette that the way under foot was strangely spongy and wet. She said nothing, however, until the Whaup exclaimed, in a serious voice—

"We are off the road, and on the moor somewhere."

Such was the fact. They had got up to the high land only to find themselves lost in a morass, with no means of securing the slightest guidance. There was nothing for it but to blunder on helplessly through the dark, trusting to find some indication of their whereabouts. At last they came to an enclosure and a footpath; and as they followed this, hoping to reach the Airlie road, they came upon a small house, which had a light in its windows.

"It is Earlshope Lodge," said the Whaup. "And there are the gates."

"Oh, let us go in and beg for some shelter," said Coquette, whose courage had forsaken her the moment she found they had lost their way.

"You may," said a voice from the mass of wet garments beside her, "you may go in, and get dry clothes, if you like; but I will not."

CHAPTER IX.

Coquette's Promise.

"Good morning, Miss Cassilis," said Lord Earlshope, as he met Coquette coming over the moorland road. "I hear you had an adventure last night. But why did not you go into the lodge and get dried?"

"Why?" said Coquette—"why, because cousin Tom and I were as wet as we could be, and it was better to go on straight to the Manse without waiting. Have you seen him this morning?"

"Your cousin? No."

"I am looking for him. I think he believes he is in disgrace at the Manse, and has gone off for some wild mischief. He has taken all his brothers with him; and I did hear him laughing and singing as he always does when he—how do you call it?—when he breaks out."

"Let me help you to look for him," said Lord Earlshope. "I am sure he ought to be proud of your solicitude, if anything is wanted to make him

happier than he is. How thoroughly that handsome lad seems to enjoy the mere routine of living!"

"You talk as if you were an old man," said Coquette, with one of her bright laughs. "Do not you enjoy living?"

"Enjoy it? No. If the days pass easily, without much bother, I am contented; but happiness does not visit a man who looks upon himself as a failure at twenty-seven."

"I do not understand you," said Coquette, with a puzzled air.

"You would provoke me into talking about myself, as if I were a hypochondriac. Yet I have no story—nothing to amuse you with."

"Oh, I do wish you to tell me all about yourself," said Coquette, with a gracious interest. "Why you remain by yourself in this place? Why you have no companions—no occupation? You are mysterious."

"I am not even that," he said, with a smile. "I have not even a mystery. Yet I will tell you all about myself, if you care to hear, as we go along. Stop me when I tire you."

So her companion began and told her all about himself and his friends, his college life, his relations, his acquaintances, his circumstances—a rather lengthy narrative, which need not be repeated here. Coquette

learned a great deal during that time, however, and saw for the first time Lord Earlshope in a true light. He was no longer to her a careless and light-hearted young man, who had made her acquaintance out of indolent curiosity, and seemed inclined to flirt with her for mere amusement. He was, in his own words, a failure at twenty-seven—a man whose extremely morbid disposition had set to work years ago to eat into his life. He had had his aspirations and ambitions; and had at length convinced himself that he had not been granted the intellect to accomplish any of his dreams. What remained to him?

"I was not fit to do anything," he said, "with those political, social, and other means that are meant to secure the happiness of multitudes. All I could do was to try to secure my own happiness, and help the philanthropists by a single unit."

"Have you done that?" said Coquette.

"No," he rejoined, with a careless shrug, "I think I have failed in that, too. All my life I have been cutting open my bellows to see where the wind came from; and if you were to go over Earlshope, you would discover the remains of twenty different pursuits that I have attempted and thrown aside. Do you know, Miss Cassilis, that I have even ceased to take any interest in the problem of myself—in the spectacle of a man physically as strong

as most men, and mentally so vacillating that he has never been able to hold an opinion or get up a prejudice to swear by. Even the dullest men have convictions about politics; but I am a Tory in sympathy and a Radical in theory, so that I am at war with myself on pretty nearly every point. Sometimes I have fancied that there are a good many men in this country more or less in my condition; and then it has occurred to me that an invasion of England would be a good thing."

"Ah, you would have something to believe in then—something to fight for!" said Coquette.

"Perhaps. Yet I don't know. If the invaders should happen to have better educational institutions than England—as is very likely—oughtn't I to fight on their side, and wish them to be successful, and give us a lesson? England, you know, owes everything to successive invasions; for the proper test of the invader's political institutions was whether they could hold their own in the country after he had planted his foot there. But I have really to beg your pardon. I must not teach you the trick of following everything to the vanishing point. You have the greatest of earthly blessings; you enjoy life without asking yourself why."

"But I do not understand," said Coquette, "how I can enjoy more than you. Is it not pleasant to

come out in the sunshine like this, after the night's rain, and see the clear sky, and smell the sweet air? You enjoy that——"

"I cannot help wondering what appetite it will give me."

Coquette made an impatient gesture with her hands.

"At least you do enjoy speaking with me here on this pleasant morning?"

"The more we talk," he said, "the more I am puzzled by the mystery of the difference between you and me. Why, the passing of a bright-coloured butterfly is an intense pleasure to you. I have seen you look up to a gleam of blue sky, and clasp your hands, and laugh with delight. Every scent of a flower, every pleasant sound, every breath of sunshine and air, is a new joy to you; and you are quite satisfied with merely being alive. Of course, it is an advantage to be alive; but there are few who make so much of it as you do."

"You think too much about it," said Coquette; "when you marry some day, you will have more practical things to think of, and you will be happier."

At the mention of the word marriage a quick look of annoyance seemed to pass across his face, but she did not notice it, and he replied lightly,

"Marriages are made in heaven, Miss Cassilis, and I am afraid they won't do much for me there."

"Ah! do not you believe in heaven?" she said, and the brown eyes were turned anxiously to his face.

"Do not let us talk about that," said he, indifferently; "I do not wish to alienate from me the only companion I have ever found in this place. Yet I do not disbelieve in what you believe, I know. What were you saying about marriage?" he added, with an apparent effort; "do you believe that marriages are made in heaven?"

"I do not know," replied Coquette; "the people say that sometimes."

"I was only thinking," remarked Lord Earlshope, with an apparently careless laugh, "that if the angels employ their leisure in making marriages, they sometimes turn out a very inferior article. Don't you think so?"

Coquette was not a very observant young person —she was much too occupied with her own round of innocent little enjoyments; but it did strike her that her companion spoke with a touch of bitterness in his tone. However, they did not pursue the subject further, for, much to their surprise, they suddenly stumbled upon the Whaup and his brothers.

The boys were at a small bridge crossing the

stream that ran down from Airlie moor; and they were so much occupied with their own pursuits that they took no notice of the approach of Coquette and her companion. Lord Earlshope, indeed, at once motioned to Coquette to preserve silence; and, aided by a line of small alder and hazel bushes which grew on the banks of the rivulet, they drew quite near to the Minister's sons without being perceived.

Coquette was right: the Whaup had "broken out." Feeling assured that he would be held responsible for all the crimes of yesterday—the affair of the crucifix, the clandestine excursion to Saltcoats, and the mishaps that accrued therefrom—the Whaup had reflected that it was as well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. When Coquette and her companion came in sight of him, he was fulfilling the measure of his iniquities.

What had moved him to vent his malignity on his younger brother Wattie—unless it was that Wattie was the "best boy" of the Manse, and, further, that he had shown an enmity to Coquette—must remain a mystery; but at this moment Wattie was depending from the small bridge, his head a short distance from the water, his feet held close to the parapet by the muscular arms of the Whaup, while one of the other boys had been made an

accomplice to the extent of holding on to Watty's trousers.

"Noo, Wattie," said the Whaup, "ye maun say a sweer afore ye get up. I'm no jokin', and unless ye be quick, ye'll be in the water."

But would Wattie, the paragon of scholars, the exemplar to his brothers, imperil his soul by uttering a "bad word?" Surely not. Wattie was resolute. He knew what punishment was held in reserve for swearers; and preferred the colder element.

"Wattie," said the Whaup, "say a sweer, or ye'll gang into the burn, as sure as daith."

No; Wattie would rather be a martyr. Whereupon—the bridge being a very low one—the Whaup and his brothers lowered Wattie a few inches, so that the ripples touched his head. Wattie set up a fearful howl; and his brothers raised him to his former position.

"Now, will ye say it?"

"*Deevil!*" cried Wattie. "Let me up; I hae said a sweer."

The other brothers raised a demoniac shout of triumph over this apostacy; and the Whaup's roars of laughter had nearly the effect of precipitating Wattie into the stream in downright earnest. But this backsliding on the part of their pious brother did not seem to the tempters sufficiently serious.

"Ye maun say a worse sweer, Wattie. '*Deevil*' is no bad enough."

"I'll droon first!" said Wattie, whimpering in his distress, "and then ye'll get your paiks, I'm thinking."

Down went Wattie's head into the burn again; and this time he was raised with his mouth sputtering out the contents it had received.

"I'll say what ye like—I'll say what ye like! *D—n*; is that bad enough?"

With another unholy shout of derision, Wattie was raised and set on the bridge.

"Noo," said the Whaup, standing over him, "let me tell you this, my man. The next time ye gang to my faither, and tell a story about any one o' us, or the next time ye say a word against the French lassie, as ye ca' her, do ye ken what I'll do? I'll take ye back to my faither by the lug, and I'll tell him ye were swearin' like a trooper down by the burn; and every one o' us will testify against ye. Ma certes, my man, I'm thinking it will be your turn to consider paiks. My faither has a bonnie switch, Wattie—a braw switch, Wattie; and what think ye he'll do to his well-behaved son that gangs about the countryside swearin' just like a Kilmarnock carter?"

Coquette held out her hand to her companion.

"Good-bye," she said, "and I do thank you for bringing me here."

Lord Earlshope perceived that he was dismissed, but did not know why. He was not aware that Coquette was trembling lest she should be seen in his forbidden company.

"Shall I see you to-morrow?" he said, as he took her hand.

"When it is fine I do always go out for a walk after breakfast," she said lightly; and so they parted.

CHAPTER X.

The Schoolmaster.

COQUETTE would have given much to have recalled these words. She felt that they implied a promise; and that if she kept her promise she would find herself hampered by the weight of a secret. Now, the girl abhorred every sort of restraint that interfered with the natural cheerfulness and lightness of her heart; and no sooner had Lord Earlshope disappeared, than she began to dread this thing that she had done. Why had he asked her to meet him? Why did not he come to the Manse? And while she stood irresolute, wondering how she could free herself from the chains that seemed likely to bind her, the Whaup and his brother made a dash at the place of her concealment.

"Hillo!" cried her cousin Tom, "how did you come here?"

"I came in search of you," she said, glancing nervously round to see that Lord Earlshope was out of sight.

"And you were spying on us, were you?" said the Whaup, with a laugh.

"Why do you ill-treat your brother so?" she said.

"It is no ill-treatment," he said, in his best English. "It is the execution o' a sentence passed on him last night by the whole of us. We are the Vehmgericht of this neighbourhood, Miss Coquette, and when any one injures you appeal to us. You have only to name him and we hamstring his cattle, set fire to his barns, and seize himself and pull out his teeth. Eh, boys?"

There was a general chorus of assent.

"But you must not call me by that name any more," said the young lady, with a blush.

"Not Coquette any more? I shall withdraw the name when I see you don't deserve it," said the Whaup, with cool insolence. It was clear he had "broken out."

The Whaup now dismissed his brothers, and proceeded to escort Coquette back across the moor. He explained, however, that he did not think it advisable for him to go into the Manse just then.

"Why?" said Coquette. "I told Mr. Cassilis all about it—he does not think you to blame."

"That means," said her companion, "that you

took the blame on yourself. But you only know the half."

With which the Whaup broke into another fit of laughter. When he had recovered, he told her the story. That morning, on issuing out, he heard Andrew and Leezibeth talking about his cousin in a not very complimentary fashion, and at once determined on revenge. There was an outhouse in which were kept garden utensils, coals, and various other things, and this outhouse had a door which was occasionally obstinate. Now the Whaup seeing Andrew at the far end of the garden, informed him that Mr. Cassilis wanted a spade brought to him; and Andrew muttered "by and by." Meanwhile, the Whaup made his way to the outhouse, opened the door, and shut himself in. Two or three minutes afterwards, Andrew came and lifted the latch. The door would not open. He shoved and shook; it would not open—the reason being merely that the Whaup, who could see through a chink, had his foot against it. At last, Andrew, obviously very angry, retired a few yards—made a race—and threw the whole of his weight upon the door. There was a crash, a stumble, a cry, and then a great pealing shriek of merriment as the Whaup jumped out of the place, leaving Andrew lying among a heap of tumbled pitchforks and hand-barrows. The

door had yielded so easily that Andrew had precipitated himself upon the floor of the outhouse, and now lay groaning.

"I don't know what he said," remarked the Whaup, as he recounted the adventure with great glee, "but it didna sound to me like the Psalms of David."

"Tom," said his cousin, "you are a wicked boy. Why don't you give up these school jokes? You are tall and strong enough to be a man: why, you behave as if you were at school."

The Whaup was not in a repentant mood.

"I'm only half and between," said he. "I am a man some days—a boy others. You can't expect me to change all at once, Miss Coquette."

"You must not call me that name," said she. "It is not fair—I am not Coquette."

"Oh, indeed," said he. "When did you see Lord Earlshope?"

"This morning," said she, with a pout.

The Whaup was instantly sobered.

"Was Lord Earlshope at the Manse?" he asked, coldly.

Now was the time for Coquette to make a full confession. Indeed, she had admitted having seen Lord Earlshope that morning for the very purpose

of telling the Whaup all about her half-promise, and so relieving her mind from its burden of secresy. But as she looked at him, she saw that his face had grown very implacable. She had not the courage to tell him. She said, in a timid way—

"He met me as I was coming to look for you, and walked a bit of the way with me."

"How far?"

Coquette drew herself up a bit.

"You have not the right to ask me such questions."

"I understand now," said the Whaup, calmly, "how you looked *caught* when I found you at the bushes, and why you turned to look over the moor. I daresay he had come there with you, and sneaked away——"

"Sneaked! — sneaked!" said Coquette, warmly (although she only guessed at the meaning of the word), "I do not know what it is; but Lord Earlshope is not afraid to be seen. Why should he be? What is wrong in his going with me there? And you think I do not know what is right for me to do?"

"Ah, well," said the Whaup, with an air of resignation. "I give you up. I see you are just like other women."

"What do you mean?" said Coquette, angrily, though she kept her eyes down.

"Nothing of any importance," said the Whaup, with a forced carelessness. "You profess you were doing what was right and fitting; but you have not explained why you should have sent Earlshope away —after all, he is a man, and would not have sneaked away but at your bidding—or why you carefully hid from the whole of us that you had just left him. What was the reason of all that concealment and hypocrisy?" he added, with a touch of indignation. "I know you were doing no wrong —I have no fear in that way for one that bears the name of Cassilis. But why make the pretence of having done wrong? Why try to hide it? Isn't that very woman-like?—isn't that very deceitful? and I thought you were something different from other women."

She was nearly confessing the truth to him—that she had resorted to this unfortunate bit of concealment, merely because she was afraid of him. But she knew that if she made this admission she would probably break down; and, as she would not show any such symptom of weakness, she merely replied to him, with an air of proud indifference,

"I cannot help it, if I am a woman."

Thereafter, dead silence. The two walked across

the moor, some little distance apart, without uttering a word. When they reached the Manse, Coquette went to her own room and shut herself up, feeling very stern, determined, and wretched.

The Whaup, on the other hand, rendered desperate, resolved to deliver himself up into the hands of justice. He walked into his father's study in order to impeach himself and demand punishment (the Whaup felt that banishment from Airlie would almost have been welcome then), but Mr. Cassilis was outside in the garden. When the Whaup at length perceived his father and approached him, he found that the Schoolmaster was seeking an audience.

The Schoolmaster was a short, stout, red-haired man, with horn-rimmed spectacles. He had a bushy red beard, and held his head well drawn back; so that, but for his defective stature, he would have looked a man of importance. However, Nature, not generous as regards inches, had been kinder to him in his voice, which was deep and sonorous; and it was the especial pride of Mr. Æneas Gillespie —Schoolmaster, Parish Clerk, and Grand Aumoner of Airlie—that he spoke a species of idiomatic English superior to the talk of the common people his neighbours. It was only on rare occasions that he

forgot himself, and relapsed into the familiar and expressive phraseology of the district.

"It is a fine—I might even say a beautiful—morning," he observed to Mr. Cassilis, as he came up.

"A beautiful morning, indeed," said the Minister.

At this moment the Whaup made his appearance, and was at once saluted by the Schoolmaster.

"Come along, young man," he said, in his stately tones, "we may ask your aid, or, as I may say, your assistance, in this matter. Mr. Cassilis, may I inquire of you what is your opinion of the present Lord Earlshope—by which, I mean, do you think him a fit companion for one o' your household?"

The Schoolmaster planted himself before the Minister, and fixed the glare of his horn-rimmed spectacles on him.

"The question is a wide one, Mr. Gillespie," said the Minister, with a smile. "I do not think we ought to set ourselves up in judgment upon our neighbours who may have been brought up under different lights from ours, and may surprise us at times, I admit, by their conduct. Nor would it be fitting for them who try to walk according to the Word to cut themselves off from all communication with people who are less particular—for these might benefit by example and the kindly teaching of acquaintanceship."

Mr. Gillespie shook his head.

"I would not interfere with your section of the public duties of this parish," observed the Schoolmaster. "You are the arbiter of morals and conduct, while I do my humble best—my endeavour, as I may say—with the education of our joint charge. But if ye will let me remark, sir, that we may be too easy with our judgment, and encourage ungodliness by associating therewith. For I would ask ye, Mr. Cassilis, if we are to draw no line between the good and the bad, what is the good—what is the good, as I may say—of being good?"

The Whaup grew very red in the face, and "snirted" with laughter.

"There are, Mr. Cassilis," continued the Schoolmaster, without pausing for an answer, "there are those who err knowingly, and should not be encouraged; there are those who err in ignorance, and should be informed. Of these last, by way of example, is Mrs. Drumsynie, the wife of a carter in Dalry, who was taken home on Tuesday last with a broken leg. Now, this woman had so far misconstrued the workings of Providence, as I may say, that when her husband was brought in to her on a shutter, she exclaimed, 'I thank the Lord we will get something out o' the Society at last,'—meaning the Benefit Society, of which I am the secretary.

This woman, as I judge, was not to be taken as an irreverent or wicked woman, but as one suffering from—or labouring under, as I may say—a misapprehension."

"I perceive, Mr. Gillespie," said Mr. Cassilis, gravely, "but ye were observing——?"

"I am coming to the point, sir. And I think I cannot do better than premise with a simple statement of fact. At this moment, or instant, as I may say, your niece is out walking alone with Lord Earlshope."

The Whaup's face flushed with something else than laughter this time—when he saw the object of the Schoolmaster's visit.

"Ye may premise with what ye like," said the lad, indignantly, "but that's a *daggont lee!*"

"Thomas!" cried the Minister, "ye shall answer for this afterward."

But the Whaup was determined to have it out with his enemy.

"At this moment, or instant, as I may say," he remarked (and the Schoolmaster dared scarcely believe he was listening to such insolence from a boy whom he had many a time thrashed), "Mr. Cassilis' niece is in this house, and not with Lord Earlshope at all. And suppose she had been, what then? Is it a crime for a girl even to speak to him if she

meets him? Is it worse than for an old man to come spying and telling tales? And if an honest woman must not walk with Earlshope, would an honest man sit down at his table? And who was it, Mr. Gillespie, proposed Lord Earlshope's health at the last tenantry dinner?"

This was a deadly thrust, and, having delivered it, the Whaup walked off. He was angry that he had been goaded into defending Lord Earlshope; but his zeal in the cause of Coquette had carried him beyond such considerations. He looked up at her window rather sadly as he passed.

"I suppose I shall be sent to Glasgow for this," he said to himself; "and she does not know it was done for her sake."

The Schoolmaster and the Minister were left looking at each other.

"I am apprehensive of that lad's future," remarked the Schoolmaster, "if he gives way to such unruly gusts of passion, and betrays the symptoms —the evidences, I might even say—of a lawless and undisciplined mind."

"We will leave that for the present, Mr. Gillespie," said the Minister, rather impatiently. "I will examine his conduct later on. In the meantime, you have something to say about my niece."

"She may be in the house——," began the Schoolmaster.

"She *is* in the house," said the Minister, decisively. "None of my boys has ever been known to tell a lie."

"At all events, Mr. Cassilis, with my own eyes did I see her walking with that young man. That is all I have to say. I leave it to you to judge whether such conduct is becoming to one who may be regarded, or considered, as your daughter; or, indeed, whether it is safe for herself. We have a duty—an obligation, I might even call it—to consider how our actions look in the eyes of our neighbour, so as not to offend, but to walk decently and uprightly——"

"Mr. Gillespie," said the Minister, interrupting him somewhat rudely, "you may depend on it that my niece has no clandestine relations with Lord Earlshope. It is not many days since they saw each other for the first time. I have no doubt that when you saw them together it was but a chance meeting. You would not have them fly from each other?"

The Schoolmaster shook his head. He was beginning a serious discourse on the duties of "professors," when the Minister was forced to remind his visitor that this was the morning on which he

began his studies for the succeeding Sabbath, and that he would be obliged to postpone further mention of the matter at present.

"We may return to it again at a more convenient season," said the Schoolmaster, as he took his leave, "seeing the importance of one in your position, Mr. Cassilis, being above reproach in all your ways and actions in this parish."

All that day, and all that evening, Coquette was very silent, proud, and miserable. Once only she saw the Whaup; but he went away from her in another direction. It was understood in the Manse that something serious with regard to the Whaup was in the wind. For more than an hour in the afternoon he was in his father's study; and when he came out, he spent the rest of the day in looking over his live pets—he supported a considerable stock of animals—and visiting his favourite haunts in the neighbourhood, just as if he were going away.

Next morning Coquette met him at breakfast; he did not speak to her. If he had even said good morning, she fancied she would have burst into tears and begged his forgiveness, and told him all that oppressed her. But again, as she saw him silent and reserved—grave, indeed, far beyond his wont—she put it down to pride; and the dainty

little woman closed her lips with an inflexible air, and felt supremely wretched.

Some little time after they had dispersed from the breakfast table, the Whaup saw Coquette cross the courtyard, with her small hat and shawl on. When she perceived him, she walked rather timidly to him, and said,

"I am going for a walk; I shall be glad if you will come with me."

"Where are you going?" he asked, coldly.

"In the direction I went yesterday. I promised to go; I do think it likely I shall meet Lord Earlshope, that is why I want you to come with me."

"You promised to meet him, and now ask me to join; no, thank you. I should be the third wheel of the cart."

He turned and walked away. She looked after him. A few minutes before she had resolved she would not go for this walk; she would rather break that scarcely given promise. But when she saw him go away like that, her lips were again pressed proudly and determinedly together, and she raised the latch of the green gate and passed out into the moorland road.

CHAPTER XI.

A Meeting on the Moor.

"I AM very miserable," said Coquette, struggling bravely to retain her tears.

"You miserable?" cried Lord Earlshope, whom she had met before she had gone five hundred yards from the Manse. "It is impossible! I do not think you have the capacity to be miserable. But what is the matter? Tell me all about it."

It was a dangerous moment for the exhibition of this kindness. She felt herself an exile from the Manse, and receiving comfort and sympathy from a stranger.

She told him her story, rapidly, and in French. To have the burden of a foreign tongue removed was in itself a consolation to her, and she found inexpressible relief in being able to talk fully and freely about all her surroundings at the Manse—about her relations with a number of people so unlike her in temperament and bringing-up—about these present circumstances which seemed to be conspiring to goad her into some desperate act.

Lord Earlshope listened patiently and attentively,

deeply interested, and yet inclined to smile sometimes.

"I should laugh at all that," said he, when she had finished, "because I am a man; and men are indifferent to these delicate considerations chiefly because they can avoid them. If a man dislikes the people he is among, he has merely to go away. But a woman is very dependent on the temper and disposition of those around her; and you especially seem almost without resource. You have no other relatives?"

"No," said Coquette.

"No lady-friend with whom you could stay?"

"Many—many with whom I should like to stay," said the girl, "but they are all in France; and I have been sent here. Yet you must not misunderstand what I do say. I do not dislike my relatives. My uncle is a very good man, and very kind to me. My cousin, I do think, is more than kind to me, and ready to incur danger in defending my faults. The other people cannot be angry with me; for I have done them no harm. Yet everything is wrong —I do not know how. At this moment I know myself very guilty in coming to see you; and I should not have come but that Cousin Tom would not speak to me."

"I think Cousin Tom has been quarreling with you about me," said Lord Earlshope.

He spoke very quietly, and with rather an amused air; but Coquette was startled and a little alarmed. She did not wish her companion to know that he had anything to do with what had occurred.

"Now," said Lord Earlshope, "it would be a great pity if I were the cause of any of your troubles. You see I have no companions here—you have not many. It seemed to me that we might often have a very pleasant chat or walk together; but I must not be selfish. You must not suffer anything on my account; so, if your friends at the Manse are inclined to mistake our brief acquaintanceship, let it cease. I do not like to see you as you are. You are evidently out of sorts, for you have never laughed this morning yet—nor run off the road—nor paid the least attention to the sunlight or the colours of the sea out yonder. I should far prefer looking at you from a distance as an entire stranger—if I could see you, as you usually are, fluttering about like a butterfly, enjoying the warmth, and colours, and light around you, without a care, and quite unconscious how perfectly happy you are."

As Coquette heard these words, uttered in a cruelly calm and kindly voice, she became afraid.

What was this strange aching sense of disappointment that filled her heart? Why was it that she contemplated with dismay a proposal which he had clearly shown would secure her happiness and peace? She was miserable before; she was ten times more wretched now.

He did not seem to notice any alteration in her expression or manner. They had got to the crest of a hill from which the line of the coast was visible—with a plain of green, sunlit sea beyond—and Arran lying like a great blue cloud on the horizon. A white haze of heat filled the south; and the distant Ailsa Craig was of a pearly grey.

Coquette's companion uttered an exclamation.

"Do you see that yacht?" said he, pointing to a boat which the distance rendered very small—a schooner yacht with her two masts lying rakishly back, and her white sails shining in the sun, as she cut through the green water with a curve of white round her prow.

"It is a stunning little boat," said Coquette simply, returning to the English which she had picked up from her father.

Lord Earlshope did not laugh at her blunder as the Whaup would have laughed. He merely said—

"It has been lying at Greenock to be repainted,

and set to rights; and I telegraphed to have the name altered as well. The first time you go down to Ardrossan you will find lying there a yacht bearing the name—'COQUETTE.'"

"Do you know," said Coquette, breaking at last into a smile, "everybody did use to call me that?"

"So I heard from one of your cousins the other day," said her companion.

"And you called the boat for me?" she said, with a look of wonder.

"Yes; I took the liberty of naming it after your pet name—I hope you are not angry with me?"

"No," she said, "I am very well pleased—very much—it is a very kind compliment to do that, is it not? But you have not told me you had a yacht."

"It is one of my abandoned amusements. I wanted to surprise you, though; and I had some wild hope of inveigling Mr. Cassilis, yourself, and your cousin into going for a day or two's cruise up some of the lochs—Loch Fyne, Loch Linnhe, or some of these. It would have been pleasant for you, I think, as you don't know anything of the West Highland lochs and mountains. The scenery is the most varied of any I have ever seen, and more picturesque in the way of colour. You can

have no idea of the weirdness and wildness of the northern sunsets; and of late I have been picturing you to myself sitting on deck with us after the sun had gone down behind a line of hill, and I have read in your face the wonder with which you saw the mountains become a great bank of purple, with a pale-green light spreading up, and over the sky, and spreading all over the sea—the stillness of the place—the calling of the wild-fowl—the dense and mysterious darkness of the mountains in the glow of cold, clear light. Do you think Mr. Cassilis would have gone?"

"I do not know," said Coquette.

She was becoming hard and obdurate again. He had spoken of this project as a thing of the past. It was no longer possible; but the mere mention of it had filled Coquette with a wistful longing. It would have been pleasant indeed to have gone away on this dream-like excursion, and wandered round the lonely islands, and up the great stretches of sea-lochs of which her father had many a time spoken to her when she was a child. Nevertheless, since her companion had chosen to give up the proposal, she would not ask him to reconsider his resolve. They were about to become strangers: well and good.

"I must go back now," she said.

He looked at her with some surprise.

"Have I offended you by telling you what I had been dreaming about? After all, it was but a fancy —and I beg your pardon for not saying first of all that I was far from sure that you yourself would go, even had I persuaded Mr. Cassilis."

"No, you have not offended me," said Coquette. "Your thought was very kind. But I am sorry it is all over."

"I see I have not brought you peace of mind yet," he said, gently. "You are not Miss Cassilis —may I say that you are not *Coquette?*—this morning. What can I do for you? I wish you would talk to me as if I were your elder brother, and tell me if there is anything in which I can help you. Shall I go up to the Manse and hint to Mr. Cassilis that—that—well, to tell you the truth, I should be at a loss to know what to hint."

He smiled; but she was quite grave.

"There is nothing," she said. "They are very good to me—what more? Do not let us talk of it any more. Let us talk of something else. Why do you never go in your yacht?"

"Because I lost interest in it, as I lost interest in a dozen other things. Steeple-chasing was my longest-lived hobby, I think, for I used to be rather

successful. Riding nine stone six, with a five-pound saddle, I have won more than one race."

"And now you only read books, and smoke, and fell trees in the cold weather to make you warm. What books? Romances?"

"Yes; and the more improbable the better."

"You get interested?"

"Yes: but not in the story. I read the story and try to look at the brain of the writer all the time. Then you begin to wonder at the various notions of the world these various heads have conceived. If I were a physiologist, I should like to read a novel, and draw a picture of the author gathered from the colouring and sentiments of his book."

"That is all so very morbid," she said. "And in your poetry, too, I suppose you like the—ah, I cannot say what I mean—."

"But I understand all the same," he said, laughing, "and I am going to disappoint you, if you have formed a theory. I like old-fashioned poetry, and especially the lyrics of the old dramatists. Then poetry was as wide as life itself, and included everything that could interest a man. A writer was not afraid to talk of everyday experiences, and was gay or patriotic, or sarcastic, just as the moment suited. But don't you think the poetry of the

present time is only the expression of one mood—that it is permeated all through with sadness and religious melancholia? What do you say, Mr. Cassilis?"

The abrupt question was addressed to the Minister. Coquette had been walking carelessly onward, with her eyes bent on the ground; and had not perceived the approach of her uncle. When she heard the sudden termination of Lord Earlshope's disquisition on poetry, she looked up with a start, and turned pale. The Minister's eyes she found fixed upon her, and she dared not return that earnest look.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Earlshope," said Mr. Cassilis, looking calmly at both of them.

"I was victimising your niece, whom I had the good fortune to meet, with a sermon on modern poetry," said Lord Earlshope, lightly; "and, as she seemed to pay no attention to me, I appealed to you. However, the subject is not an enticing one—as Miss Cassilis apparently discovered. Which way are you walking. Shall we join you?"

The deep-set eyes of the Minister, under the grey eyebrows, were closely regarding the speaker during the utterance of these words. Mr. Cassilis was satisfied—so far as Lord Earlshope was concerned. No actor could have been so obviously and wholly at ease—the fact being that the young

man did not even suspect that he had become an object of suspicion. He had not inveigled the Minister's niece into a secret interview; on the contrary, he had, mainly by chance, met a pleasant and pretty neighbour out for her morning walk, and why should he not speak to her?

But when the Minister turned to Coquette he found a different story written on her face—a story that caused him some concern. She appeared at once embarrassed and distressed. She said nothing, and looked at neither of them; but there was in her eyes (bent on a bit of heather she was pulling to pieces) an expression of constraint and disquiet, which was plainly visible to him, if not to Lord Earlshope.

"If you will relieve me from the duties of escort," said the latter to Mr. Cassilis, "I think I shall bid you both good morning, as I have to walk over to Altyre Farm and back before luncheon."

So he parted from them, Coquette not daring to look up as he shook hands with her. She and the Minister were left alone.

For a minute or two they walked on in silence; and it seemed to Coquette that the hour of her deepest tribulation had come. So bright and happy had been the life of this young creature that with her to be downcast was to be miserable—to be

suspected was equivalent to being guilty. Suspicion she could not bear—secrecy seemed to suffocate her; and she had now but one despairing notion in her head—to escape and fly from this lonely northern place whither she had been sent—to get away from a combination of circumstances that appeared likely to overwhelm her.

"Uncle," she said, "may I go back to France?"

"My child!" said Mr. Cassilis, in amazement, "what is the matter? Surely you do not mean that your short stay with us has been disagreeable to you? I have noticed, it is true, that you have of late been rather out o' sorts, but judged it was but some temporary indisposition. Has anything annoyed you—have you any cause of complaint?"

"Complaint!" she said; "when you have been so kind to me? No, no complaint. But I do think I am not good enough for this place—I am sorry I cannot satisfy, although I put away all my pictures, and books, and the crucifix, so that no one can see. But I am suspected—I do hear them talk of me as dangerous. It is natural—it is right, perhaps—but not pleasant to me. Just now," she added, desperately, "you think I did promise to meet Lord Earlshope, and you did come to take me home."

"Had you not promised?" said the Minister, looking steadily and yet affectionately at her.

For a second the girl's lip trembled; but the next moment she was saying rapidly, with something of wildness in her tone and manner—

"I did not promise; no. But I did expect to see him—I did hope to see him when I came out; and is it wrong? Is it wrong for me to speak to a stranger, when I do see him kind to me, in a place where there are not many amiable people? If it is wrong, it is because Lord Earlshope is not suspicious, and hard, and ill-judging, like the others. That is why they do say ill of him; that is why they persuade me to think ill of him. I do not; I will not. Since I left France I did meet no one so courteous—so friendly—as he has been. Why can I talk to him so easily? He does not think me wicked because I have a crucifix that my mother gave me—that is why we are friends; and he does not suspect me. But it is all over. We are not to be friends again; we may see each other to-morrow; we shall not speak. Shall I tell Leesiebess?—perhaps it will please her!"

She spoke with an angry and bitter vehemence, that was strangely out of consonance with her ordinary serenity of demeanour. The Minister took her hand gently in his, saying nothing at all, and led her back to the Manse.

CHAPTER XII.

Coquette's Conquests.

THERE ensued a long period of rain—day after day breaking sullen and cold, and a perpetual drizzle falling from a grey and cheerless sky. There were none of the sharp and heavy showers which a south-west gale brings, with dashes of blue between; but a slow, fine, wetting rain, that rendered everything humid and limp, and hid the far-off line of the sea and the mountains of Arran behind a curtain of grey mist.

Perhaps it was the forced imprisonment caused by the rain which made Coquette look ill; but, at all events, she grew so pale and listless that even the boys noticed it. All her former spirits were gone. She was no longer interested in their sports, and taught them no more new games. She kept much to her own room, and read at a window. She read those books which she had brought with her from the sunny region of the Loire; and when she turned from the open page to look out upon the wet

and misty landscape all around, she came back again with a sigh to the volume on her knee.

Lord Earlshope never came near the Manse; perhaps, she thought, he had left the country. The only communication she had with him was on the day following their last meeting. She then sent him a note consisting of but one line, which was—"Please do not call your boat 'Coquette.'" This missive she had entrusted to her cousin Wattie, who delivered it, and returned with the answer that Lord Earlshope had merely said "All right." Wattie, however, broke the confidence reposed in him, and told his brothers that he had been sent with a message to Earlshope. The Whaup profited by this intelligence, but punished Wattie all the same; for on that night, Coquette heard murmurings and complainings underneath her window. She looked out. There was some starlight, and she could indistinctly see a figure in white moving in the garden underneath that building, the upper storey of which, originally a hay-loft, had been transformed into a dormitory for the boys. The cause of the disturbance soon became apparent. After the boys had undressed, the Whaup had wheedled or compelled Wattie into making a rush to the garden for some fruit. He had then taken advantage of his position to pull the ladder into the loft, by which

mean device his brother was left standing below in his night-shirt. In vain Wattie petitioned to be let up to his bed. With his teeth chattering in his head, he entreated that at least his trousers might be flung down to him; but he was not relieved from punishment until the Whaup had administered a severe lecture to him on the shabbiness of betraying a lady's confidence.

"I'll never do't again, as sure's I'm here!" said Wattie, who was feebly endeavouring to mitigate his sufferings by balancing himself on his toes—a feat in which he naturally failed.

"Since it won't rain," said the Whaup, looking spitefully at the clear star-lit sky, "there is no much use in keeping you there, so ye may hae the ladder."

The Whaup never spoke to Coquette about that letter, but it was the occasion of his prolonging the blockade which he had declared. He deliberately ignored her presence. He would not complain of her keeping up what he imagined to be a clandestine correspondence; neither would he take any steps to put an end to it. He contented himself with thinking that if ever there should be necessity for confronting Lord Earlshope personally, and altering matters that way, there would be one per-

son in the Manse ready to adventure something for the sake of Coquette.

Nevertheless, it was at this time, and it was through the Whaup's instrumentality, that Coquette achieved her first great victory in Airlie—a success which was but the beginning of a strange series of successes, and fraught with important consequences to her. It all fell about in this way. First, the Whaup relented. When the rain began, and he saw his French cousin mope and pine indoors—when he saw how she was growing languid and listless, and still strove to be cheerful and amiable to those around her, his reserve broke down. By insensible degrees he tried to re-establish their old relations. He showed her little attentions, and performed towards her small acts of thoughtfulness and kindness, which she was not slow to acknowledge. He was not impudently and patronisingly good to her as he had been—there was a certain restraint over his approaches; but she met them all with that simplicity of gratitude which the dark eyes and the sweet face could so readily and effectually express when her imperfect English failed her. And the Whaup no longer corrected her blunders with his old scornful impatience.

One morning there was a temporary cessation of the rain.

"Why don't you go down and return the Pensioner's visit?" said the Whaup to Coquette.

"If you please, I will go."

For the first time for many a day these two went out of the Manse together. It was like a revival of the old times—though the Whaup would not have believed you had you told him how short a space Coquette had actually lived in Airlie. The cold and damp wind brought a tinge of colour to the girl's cheeks; the Whaup thought he had never seen her look so pleasant and pretty.

While Coquette lingered in the small garden of the cottage, the Whaup went up to the door and told the Pensioner who had come to see him.

"Cot pless me!" he hastily exclaimed, looking down at his legs. "Keep her in sa garden till I change my breeks."

"What for?" said the Whaup.

"Dinna ye see sey are tartan!" cried Neil, in an excited whisper, "and sa French canna stand sa tartan."

"Nonsense!" said the Whaup. "She won't look at your trousers."

"It is no nonsense, but very good sense whatever," said the Highlandman; "it wass two friends o' mine, and they went over to France sa very last year, and one o' them, sey took his bags and his

luggage, and sey pulled sis way and sat way, and sey will sweer at him in French—but he will not know what it wass said to him—and sey will take many things from him, mirover, and he will not know why. But, said I to him, 'Tonald, will you have on your tartan plaid round your shoulders?' And says he, 'I had.' And said I to him, 'Did you will no ken how sa French canna stand sa tartan ever since Waterloo?'"

The Pensioner ran inside, and speedily re-appeared in plain grey. Then he came out, and bade Coquette welcome with a dignified courtesy that surprised her.

"You would not come to see me, so I have come to see you," she said to the old man.

"It wassna for the likes o' me to visit a letty," said Neil.

He dusted a chair with his sleeve, and asked her to sit down. Then he put three glasses on the table, and brought out a black bottle. He filled one of the glasses and offered it to Coquette.

"She can't drink whisky!" said the Whaup, with a rude laugh.

"It is sa rale Lagavulin," said Neil, indignantly, "and wouldna harm a flee."

Coquette put the glass to her lips, and then placed it on the table.

"Ye may drink it up, mem," said Neil. "Do ye ken that ye can drink sa goot whisky until ye stagger, and it will do ye no harm in sa morning? I do pelieve it is sa finest sing in the world's universe—a gran' good stagger as ye will go home in sa night."

"You have been in battle?" said Coquette, by way of changing the conversation.

"Oh, yes, mem," said Neil, looking desperately uncomfortable. "It wass—it wass—it wass in a war."

"Have you been in more than one war?" she asked.

"No, mem—yes, mem," stammered Neil, in great embarrassment, as he glanced to see that his tartan trousers were well shoved under the bed; "but it is of no matter how many wars. It will pe all over pefore you were porn—never mind about sa wars."

"I hear you were at Waterloo!" said Coquette, innocently.

The Pensioner jumped to his feet.

"Who wass it tellt you of Waterloo?" said he, in great indignation. "I never heard sa like. It wass a shame—and I would not take a hundred pounds and forget mysel' like sat. And you will be blaming us Hielanders for what we did—and

we did a goot teal there—but there wass others too. There wass English there too. And the French —sey fought well, as every one o' us will tell ye; and I wouldna sink too much o't, for maype it isna true sat Napoleon died on sa island. Didna he come pack pefore?"

Having offered Coquette this grain of comfort, Neil hastily escaped from the subject by getting his violin and beginning to screw up the strings.

"I have been learning a lot of your Scotch airs," said Coquette, "and I have become very fond of some of them—the sad ones especially. But I suppose you prefer the lively ones for the violin."

"I can play sem all every one together," said Neil, proudly. "I do not play sem well, but I know all our music—every one."

"You play a great deal?"

"No," said Neil, fondling his violin affectionately, "I do not play sa fiddle much, but I like to be aye playing."

There was a touch of pathos in the reply which did not escape the delicate perception of his guest. She looked at the old man, at his scanty grey hair and dazed eyes, and was glad that he had this constant companion to amuse and interest him. He did not like to play much—to make a labour of

this recreation; but he liked to have the tinkle of the tight strings always present to his ear.

He played her a selection of his best airs, with many an apology. He chatted about the tunes too, and told tales concerning them, until he was as familiar with the young lady as though he had known her a lifetime, and she was laughing at his odd stories more than she had laughed for many a day. At last she said—

"That 'Flowers of the Forest' is a beautiful air, but you want it harmonised. Will you come up to the Manse now, and I will try to play it for you? I have been trying it much lately."

So the Pensioner walked up to the Manse with them, and soon found himself in Coquette's parlour. His hostess remembered how she had been received, and went into the room adjoining for a second or two. When she returned there was a small bottle in her hand.

"This is some French brandy which my old nurse gave me when I left, in case I should be ill at sea; you see I have not even opened the bottle."

The Whaup got a corkscrew and a glass, and soon had half a tumblerful of the brandy to offer to Neil. The Pensioner looked at it, smelt it, said

"Deoch slainte!" and,—to the horror of Coquette—gulped it down. The next moment his face was a mass of moving muscles—twisting and screwing into every expression of agony, while he gasped and choked, and could only say, "Water!—water!" But when the Whaup quickly poured him out a glass of water he regarded it at arm's length for a second, and then put it away.

"No," he said, with his face still screwed up to agony pitch, "I can thole."

Coquette did not understand what had happened; but when her cousin, with unbecoming frankness, explained to her that the Pensioner would rather "thole" (or suffer) the delicious torture in his throat than spoil it with water, she was nearly joining in the Whaup's impudent laughter.

But the brandy had no perceptible effect on Neil. He sat and listened sedately to the music she played; and it was only when his enthusiasm was touched that he broke out with some exclamation of delight. At length the old man left—the Whaup also going away to those exceptional studies which had been recently imposed on him as a condition of his remaining at Airlie.

Coquette sat alone at the piano. The grey day was darkening to the afternoon, and the rain had begun again its wearisome patter on the pane. She

had French music before her—bright and laughing songs of the bygone and happy time—but she could not sing them. Almost unconsciously to herself, she followed the wanderings of her fancy in the dreamland of that old and plaintive music that she had recently discovered. Now it was "Bothwell Bank," again it was "The Land o' the Leal" that filled the room with its sadness, until she came back again to "The Flowers of the Forest." She sang a verse of it—merely out of caprice, to see if she could master the pronunciation—and just as she had finished the door was opened, and Leezibeth stood there.

Coquette turned from the piano with a sigh: doubtless Leezibeth had come to prefer some complaint.

The woman came up to her and said—with the most painful shamefacedness clouding her look—

"Will ye sing that again, Miss, if it is no much trouble to ye? Maybe ye'll no ken that me and Andrew had a boy—a bit laddie that dee'd when he was but seven years auld—and—and he used to sing the 'Flowers o' the Forest' afore a' the other songs, and ye sing it that fine that if it didna mak a body amaist like to greet——"

She never finished the sentence; but the girl

sang the rest of the song, and the woman stood, with her eyes turned to the grey evening outside, silent. And from that day Leezibeth was the slave of Coquette.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Horoscope.

EVENTS were marching on at Airlie. Leezibeth came to Coquette, and said—

"Sir Peter and Lady Drum came back frae Edinburgh last night."

Coquette remained silent, and Leezibeth was astonished. Was it possible the girl had never heard of Sir Peter and Lady Drum?

"And I saw my lady this morning, and she is coming to see you this very afternoon," said Leezibeth, certain she had now effected a surprise.

"Who are they?" said Coquette. "Are they Scotch? I do not wish to see any more Scotch."

"Ma certes!" said Leezibeth, firing up suddenly; but presently she said, in a voice more gentle than Coquette had ever heard her use—"Ye'll maybe like the Scotch folk yet, Miss, when ye hae time to understand them; and Lady Drum is a grand woman—just an extraordinar' woman; and I told her a' about ye, Miss, and she was greatly interested,

as I could see; and I made bold, Miss, to say that ye were a bit out o' sorts the now, and if my lady would but ask ye ower to Castle Cawmil, and let ye hae some company mair fitted to ye than us bodies about the Manse, it might cheer ye up a bit, and bring a bit colour to your cheek."

Coquette was really surprised now. Could it be Leezibeth, her enemy, who was speaking in this timidly solicitous fashion?

"It is very good of you——"

"Oh, we are no so bad as ye think us," said Leezibeth, plucking up courage. "And there is Scotch blood in your ain veins, Miss, as anybody can see—for the way ye sing they Scotch songs is just past believin'!"

From Coquette's sitting-room Leezibeth went straight to the Minister's study.

"I have come to speak to ye, sir, about Miss Cassilis."

"Dear me!" said the Minister impatiently, "I wish ye would let my niece alone, Leezibeth!"

But the Minister was no less astonished than Coquette had been when Leezibeth unfolded her tale, and made it apparent that she had come to intercede for the young French girl. Leezibeth stood at the door, and announced it as her decision that the Minister was bound to see to his niece's

health and comfort more effectually than he had done. She spoke, indeed, as if she dared the Minister to refuse.

"And Sir Peter and my lady are coming here," continued Leezibeth, "for I met them as they were going over to Earlshope, and my lady spoke to me about Miss Cassilis, and will doubtless ask her to visit her. Not only maun she visit Castle Cawmil, but she maun stay there, sir, until the change has done the lassie good."

"What is the meaning of all this, Leezibeth?" said the Minister. "Has she bewitched you? Yesterday you would have said of her, 'She is a Samaritan, and hath a devil.' Now she has become your Benjamin, as it were. What will Andrew say?"

"Let the body mind his peas and his pittawties, and no interfere wi' me," said Leezibeth, with a touch of vigorous contempt.

Nevertheless, Leezibeth had a conversation with her husband very shortly after, and was a good deal more cautious in her speech than was her wont. When Andrew came into the kitchen to have his dinner, she said—

"Andrew, my man, I'm thinkin' we dinna understand they Romans. Could ye but see the gude books that that lassie has wi' her, and see her read a bit o' one o' them every night and every mornin'

—indeed, I'm thinkin', Andrew, the Romans maun be a kind o' religious folk, after a.'"

Andrew said "Hm!" and went on with his broth.

"I wonder," continued Leezibeth, regarding her husband with some apprehension, "whether there is ony harm in the bit pictures she has. It's my opeenion she doesna worship them—as if they were a graven eemage—but has them, maybe, to jog her memory. Ye ken, Andrew, that there was a gran' difference atween the gowden calf that the children o' Israel made and the brazen serpent that the Lord commanded Moses to lift up in the wilderness."

"Whatever is the woman at?" muttered Andrew to himself, over his plate.

"The serpent was only a sign and a symbol, the forshadowin' o' what was to come; and surely Moses kenned what he was doin' and didna transgress. Now, Andrew, if the Romans—children o' wrath as they are—have a bit cross or a crucifix only as a sort o' remembrance, there is maybe no so muckle harm in it."

Andrew dropped his spoon into the broth, and sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Am I listenin' or dreamin', woman? What evil spirit is it that has put these things into your mouth, and linked ye wi' them whaus feet are set in hell?

Are ye clean daunert, woman, that ye should come as an apologist for such folk, and tread the blood o' the covenant under foot? Nae wonder they have their crucifixes and their picturs—for it is their judgment that they maun look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn their lost condition. And it is this lassie that has done it a', as I said frae the first. 'Twas a sad day for us that she came to Airlie; the Manse has never been itsel' since then. Yet never did I think to hear such words from a woman well brought up as ye have been; and it fears me to think what will be the end o't."

"Bless me!" said Leezibeth, testily, "I only asked for your opeenion."

"And my opeenion is," said Andrew, "that the time is coming when ye will see this woman in her true colours, and she will no longer be a snare to the feet o' them that would walk decently and uprightly. Ye hae been led awa' by the tempter, Leezibeth, and the fair things o' the world hae been set before ye, and the kingdoms thereof, and your eyes are blinded. But there will come a day—and that soon—when this Manse will see a change, and her that has entered it will be driven forth to seek another people. Dinna be beguiled in the meantime, Leezibeth. The end is comin', and her pictures and her crucifixes will not save her then."

"What do ye mean, Andrew?" said his wife, who was nearly in tears. "I am sure the lassie has done no wrong. I declare my heart feels for her when I see her sittin' by the window, a' by herself, looking out at naething, and a fair *wecht* o' weariness and patience on her face. If she had a mother, now, to look after her and speak to her——"

"And how long is it," said Andrew, "since ye hae taen this interest in her? How did she cast her wiles ower ye?"

Leezibeth did not answer. She was thinking of the vague and dreadful future which Andrew had been prophesying.

"Let her alone—leave her to hersel'," said Andrew. "I warn ye against this woman, Leezibeth, as I hae warned the Minister, though he would tak nae heed, and leaves her wi' a' her idolatrous implements free to work destruction in the midst o' a decent and God-fearing house. Yet in time this will be changed; and we will have to cast out the serpent. 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them, and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.'"

"Who is that you are talking about? Is it my cousin?" said the Whaup, haughtily, as he suddenly

stood before them. He had come into the kitchen hurriedly, in order to get some glue for a "dragon" which he was making for a younger brother, and had heard the latter end of Andrew's bitter forecast.

As for Leezibeth, she had turned aside in deep distress. Her newly awakened sympathy for the girl was rudely troubled by these sinister anticipations of her husband; and she did not know what to think of them. But Andrew, who had for the moment forgotten his broth, was looking up when he saw the Whaup suddenly appear. The old man's face, which was severe enough as he spoke, assumed a deep frown on his seeing his enemy; he was evidently annoyed at being "caught," and yet determined to brave it out.

"Why, you can't eat your dinner without stopping to talk spite and scandal," said the Whaup, with a curl of his lip. "Can't you leave that to women? And a pretty Daniel you are, with your prophecies, and your judgments, and your warnings! —but if you will be a Daniel, by jingo! I'll make this house worse to you than any den of lions ever you were in in your life!"

The Whaup went out and summoned a secret conclave of his brothers. The *Vehmgericht* met in the hay-loft.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sir Peter and Lady Drum.

COQUETTE, sitting quietly in the general parlour, the Minister being busy with his reading, heard voices in the hall, and one of them startled her. Indeed, she suddenly put her hand to her heart, having felt a quick flutter, as of pain, there, and a tinge of colour came to her pale face. The next moment Leezibeth announced Sir Peter and Lady Drum, and Lord Earlshope; and these three entered the room.

Sir Peter was a little, stout, rosy-cheeked, and fair-haired man, who wore a suit of light grey, and had a big diamond ring on his finger. There was a pleasant expression in his face—a look of gaiety in his eyes—and his laugh, which was heard rather too often, passed beyond all the bounds of decorum in its long shrill peals. He laughed as he went briskly forward to shake hands with the Minister; he laughed and made a feeble joke when he was introduced to Coquette; he laughed and made another feeble joke when he led forward his wife to the young girl.

Coquette found herself confronted by a most striking-looking woman—one who might have sat for a picture of a *grande dame* of the last generation. Lady Drum was a tall, elderly, upright person, with a massive face which was yet kindly in the severity of its features, and with a fine head of grey hair, elaborately arranged. Lady Drum was widely known in the neighbourhood for her inflexible judgments on people's conduct, her generous but scrupulously calculated aid to all who were in need, and her skill in medicine, which she loved to practise; and it was a popular mystery how this stately and imposing lady could have married the gay little gentleman who was now her husband. Yet they agreed remarkably well, and seemed to have a mutual esteem for each other. She bore with great equanimity his perpetual jokes, his ceaseless and rambling talk, and loud laughter; while he was fond to address her as his "jewel," and declare that she had saved his life twenty times with her physic. Of all the people in the country the Drums were the only people whom Lord Earlshope was ever known to visit; and his regard and liking for the grave and noble-looking lady of Castle Cawmil had even led him to permit himself to be dosed and doctored upon occasions. Sometimes they corresponded; and the contents of Lady Drum's

letters chiefly consisted in motherly advice about the use of flannel in spring time, and the great virtues of some new herb she had discovered. As for Sir Peter, Lord Earlshope seldom saw him when he visited Castle Cawmil. Sir Peter was anywhere —everywhere—but in his own house. He flitted about the country, enjoying himself wherever he went; for the number of his friends was legion; while Lady Drum attended to her poultry-yard and her patients at home.

Coquette found fixed upon her a pair of severe and scrutinising eyes; but there was something in the appearance of the tall grey-haired woman which she could not help admiring and even liking. When she spoke—which she did in a grave and deliberate fashion, with a considerably marked Scotch accent —her voice had all the softness which her features lacked.

"I hope you will find Airlie a pleasant place," said Lady Drum, still retaining Coquette's hand.

"Dull—dull—dull," said Sir Peter, looking out of the window, and humming to himself. "Very dull—very dull—very dull. Ha, ha! Hm, hm! Ha, ha!"

"And we shall hope to see you often at Castle Cawmil," said Lady Drum.

"I thank you," said Coquette, simply, but making no promise.

"Pleasanter for you than for her," said Sir Peter, gaily. "My dear young lady, if you come to Castle Cawmil, we shall all be very grateful; but you mustn't expect to have much amusement, you know. Lectures on typhus—lectures on typhus, you know—pills, draughts, blisters—hm, hm! ha, ha! ha, ha!"

Lady Drum paid no attention to the small playfulnesses of her husband, but turned to the Minister.

"Your worthy housekeeper has been telling me that your niece is very much in want of a change. I can see it. The wet weather has shut her up. She wants to be let out into the air, with companions and amusement; and I would even recommend a little tansy or, perhaps, gentian root. If she were with me for a week or two I might try the Caribbean cinchona, which has proved an excellent tonic within my own experience; but as for horse-chestnut bark, which some prefer to use, I do not hold wi' that in any case. Lord Earlshope will tell ye, Mr. Cassilis, that the Caribbean cinchona—"

"Did me a world of good," said Lord Earlshope. "Indeed I was quite ashamed to get well

so rapidly, and deprive my amiable physician of the chance of watching the effects of her cure. In fact, I got so ridiculously well that I had no occasion to drink any of the coltsfoot wine that Lady Drum was good enough to send me. Shall I transfer it to you, Miss Cassilis, when you become one of Lady Drum's patients?"

"I will take it—if it is nice," said Coquette.

Lady Drum did not like this way of treating the subject, especially as her husband was moving about the room from place to place, joking about everybody all round in a somewhat impudent way, and humming a series of reflections on physic generally, which interfered with the dignity of the situation.

"Fine thing, physic—grand thing, physic—hm! hm!—old woman comes and gets her physic, and sixpence—ha, ha!—drinks the sixpence, and flings away the physic—with a 'God bless all doctors—if possible.' Hm, hm! hm, hm! ha, ha! Capital garden that of yours, Mr. Cassilis—capital—too much like a wilderness, perhaps. Got the old pony in the stables yet—old Bess with the swallow-tail? Remember how the Hielandman thought the flicht o' a swallow was like a squint lum?"

"What is that?" said Lord Earlshope.

"Untranslateable—untranslateable," carolled Sir

Peter. "'Bekass it wass a crookit flue.' More untranslateable still, isn't it? We must be going, my lady."

But my lady had got into a very confidential chat with Coquette, and had even aired a few French phrases to show that she had been used to polite accomplishments in her youth. She had been to Paris, also; had seen the Place de la Bastille; and considered herself profound in the history of the capital. Their talk, nevertheless, was chiefly of Airlie, and of Coquette's experiences there.

"I did like the place better when I came here," said the girl. "Much better. Yet, it is pretty, you know—when there is sun, and it is not cold. It is always the same thing at Airlie—the same place, the same people, the same things to do each day. That is tiresome when one is indoors in the rain—when one is out in good days there is variety. If you will let me visit you, I shall be joyous—joyful—no, I mean I shall be glad to visit you and see you. And will you come to Airlie often? I have no lady-friend in this country, you know—only my uncle and the boys—and if you will be pleased to come and see me, it will be a great pleasure to me."

"But I am an old woman," said Lady Drum. "I should be a poor companion for you."

"But I have always lived with old people," said Coquette, somewhat too bluntly; "I do like old people better than young."

Lady Drum was puzzled. Why did this young creature talk so sadly, and show none of the liveliness and hope natural to her age? Surely, with her graceful and well-formed figure, her clear dark eyes, and the healthy red of her lips that were obviously meant to laugh, she ought to have plenty of spirit and life? Lady Drum had never seen the true Coquette—the Coquette to whom every day was a holiday, and every incident in it a joyous experience; but she half divined that the pale, pretty, dark-eyed girl who sat beside her, and who had an ease of manner which was the perfection of simplicity, was not strung up to her natural pitch of health and enjoyment. Lady Drum had never heard Coquette laugh in the open air, or sing to herself in the garden; but she had a suspicion that the beauty of the girl's face was paler than it ought to be.

"Quassia!" said Lady Drum suddenly, and Coquette started; but presently her elderly friend said—"No. We must try something else first. Castle Cawmil would be tiresome just now, with an old woman like me in it. By and by, my lassie, you must come and see me when I have got to-

gether some young folks; and we shall have half the gentlemen in Ayrshire fighting for the first quadrille."

"Is there dancing at your house?" said Coquette, with interest.

"Dancing! Yes, as much dancing as young lassocks like you should have—wha will not be persuaded to take any other sort o' exercise."

"I was told it was evil here," said Coquette, remembering certain of Leezibeth's orations.

"Evil! evil!" said Lady Drum. "If there was muckle evil in it, it would'na set it's foot within my doors. But then, ye see, Miss Cassilis, this is a minister's house, and a minister maun be discreet —no to give offence, as it were. Doubtless, your uncle, being a reasonable man, kens that what was used as a pairt of the worship of the Lord may surely be used without harm as an innocent and usefu' recreation; but he has to mind a lot o' strict and suspicious bodies, that see the image of Satan himsel' whene'er they look beyond the rim o' their ain porridge-pot."

"Now, my lady," cried Sir Peter, "sorry to interrupt your chat with Mr. Cassilis' charming niece; but I know she will thank me for getting her away from your tansy and coltsfoot wine. Come

along—come along—come along—ha, ha! hm, hm! ha, ha!"

"Not before I have arranged this little matter," said Lady Drum, with dignity, as she turned to Lord Earlshope, who had been conversing with the Minister. "Lord Earlshope, do ye mind that you pressed me to make use o' your yacht when occasion suited?"

"Certainly I do," said Lord Earlshope. "She is quite at your service—always; and just at present she is in capital cruising order, with all her men on board. Do you propose to take Miss Cassilis for a run up some of the lochs?"

"Indeed, it was the very thing I was thinking of," said Lady Drum.

"Then you have only to drive to Ardrossan any day you choose, and give Maxwell his sailing orders. He is a steady old fellow, and will take every care of you."

Coquette listened mutely, with her eyes fixed on the ground. Lord Earlshope, then, proposed that she and Lady Drum should go by themselves: she did not think it very civil.

"I had some notion of asking Mr. Cassilis to form a party and go for a short cruise, but I dismissed it as chimerical. Perhaps you will be more successful if you try."

"Now tell me," said Lady Drum, with a business-like air, "how many you can take on board."

"Why, half the population of Airlie, or thereabouts. But there is one very grand state-room which you ladies could share between you; and as for your gentlemen friends, you might ask as many as had been accustomed to the exigencies of yachts —myself among the number, I hope. As for Sir Peter——"

"No, no, no!" cried Sir Peter, gaily. "No yachting for me—sleeping in a hole—washing out of a tea-cup—wet to the skin all day—ha, ha! hm, hm! ha, ha! No yachting for me—off to Peebles on Tuesday—then back to Edinburgh the week after—my lady may go if she likes."

"Mr. Cassilis, may we reckon on you?" said Lady Drum, severely ignoring her husband's volatility. "Your niece demands some change of the kind; and I have entered into a contract long ago with Lord Earlshope about the yacht."

"You need not be frightened by what Sir Peter says," observed Lord Earlshope, with a laugh. "On board a sixty-ton yacht you are not put to such dreadful inconveniences—indeed, you may be as much at home in the 'Caroline' as in a steamer. Shall I add my entreaties to those of Lady Drum? If you could get away from your duties for a week

or two, it would be a pleasant holiday at this season; and, if you like, I will go with you for a day or two, to see you all comfortably settled."

There was positively a blush on the pale grey face of the Minister. The notion of taking a holiday for the mere purpose of pleasure was quite startling to him—had, in fact, something dangerous about it. Had the proposal, indeed, not been made in the first instance by Lady Drum—whose decision as to matters of propriety was law throughout the district—he would not even have considered it for a moment.

"I cannot give an answer out-of-hand," he said, gravely, and yet with some hesitation. "Doubtless it is a tempting and a kind offer; but there are other obligations binding on us than our own wishes——."

"Now, Mr. Cassilis," said Lady Drum, "have you not mentioned to me that you greatly desired some opportunity should occur to permit you to give young Mr. M'Alister your pulpit for the day—an honour that he has fairly set his heart on?"

"But I should like to be present to witness his trial," said the Minister, fighting against himself.

"Ye may trust him—ye may trust him," said Lady Drum, decisively. "He is as safe as an auld horse wi' blinders on. No fear o' him alarmin' the

congregation wi' new doctrine—he hasna spunk enough to be dangerous."

This somewhat dubious testimony to the intellectual "safety" of the young man carried some weight, evidently, and Mr. Cassilis then turned to his niece.

"Catherine," said he, solemnly, "you have heard Lady Drum's proposal—would it please you to go?"

"Oh, very much," said Coquette, "if—if my cousin could also go."

The Minister stared: how had the Whaup come to be of such consequence?

"Do you mean my friend Tom?" said Lord Earlshope. "Why, of course he can go. There is nothing to hinder him."

Coquette was very grateful; but said nothing. There was a brighter look on her face, however, than had been there for many a day. The Minister said he would consider the matter; and—if he saw that his duties to his parishioners would not suffer —he hoped to be able to take his niece on this voyage of health.

When the visitors had gone, Coquette went outside to look for the Whaup. She found him in the garden—inclined to be more reserved than ever on

account of this appearance of Lord Earlshope at the Manse.

"Tom," she said, "I do wish to speak to you—to ask why you avoid me—when you were my good companion for a long time. Why should we quarrel?"

"Quarrel!" said the Whaup—as if he laughed at the idea of his bothering himself to quarrel with anybody—"I haven't quarrelled; I haven't time to quarrel. But I suppose you are come to be penitent and all that; and probably you will cry. I don't like to see you cry; so I'll make friends at once if you like."

"Is that how you do make friends in Scotland?" said Coquette, with a laugh in her eyes,—"standing a yard off—looking fierce—and speaking harsh."

"Oh, I will kiss you, if you like," said the Whaup, bluntly, and he advanced for that purpose.

"No," said Coquette, with the least change of manner—and yet that delicate alteration in her tone and look protected her as though with a wall of iron. "I did not ask you. But I have something to ask of very much importance—oh! such great importance? And I wish you to be kind as you once were—but I am afraid on this day. It is too cold—too dull. On a clear day you would say yes."

"Don't talk so much, but tell me what it is," said the Whaup. He was warding off, rudely, the insidious attacks of his too pretty cousin.

"It is proposed we all go with Lord Earlshope's yacht on a long voyage round the Islands—your papa and Lady Drum, and me, too; and it depends if you will go that I will go."

"I go!" said the Whaup, with a burst of laughter. "In Lord Earlshope's yacht! You must be mad!"

"If you do not go, I will not go," said Coquette, simply.

"Perhaps it is better you shouldn't go," said the Whaup.

"Perhaps it is," said Coquette, turning away towards the house.

The Whaup looked after her for a moment, then he followed her.

"Look here—what do you want to go for?" he asked.

"I thought it would be pleasurable—the amusement, the going away from this place a few days—the whole of us together. But I am not anxious—I can stay at home."

"Why can't you go without me?" said he.

"I wanted you for a companion," said Coquette, looking down. "There will be nobody but your

papa and Lady Drum—Lord Earlshope only comes for a day or two, to see us off."

He looked at her downcast face in a scrutinising way—he was not sure about her.

"You know, I don't believe in you as I did at one time. People who deceive you once will deceive you again," he said.

She looked up with an angry glance, and bitter tears sprang to her eyes.

"How can you say that?" she said, indignantly. "You are too hard—you have no mercy—you expect everyone to be as rude as yourself. If you do not believe me, it is no matter to me; I can believe myself—that is enough."

With these words, she was again turning proudly away, when he caught her by the hand and stopped her.

"You are a very peculiar young woman," he said. "You are always firing off somehow or other—always very delighted or else very miserable. Why don't you take things coolly, as I do? I don't say you're very bad because you went in for little trifling useless bits of deceit. I suppose every woman does that—it's their nature, and it's no use grumbling. If you had any sense, you'd dry your eyes, get something on your head, and come and see us dig up a bees' nest that I have found."

"Yes, I will do that," she said, adding, timidly, "and about the yacht—I am not to go?"

He looked in her eyes just then, and, oddly enough, that glance somehow made him aware that he was holding her hand—a little, white hand, that had a couple of tiny rings on one of the fingers. He dropped the hand at once; was uncomfortable and shy for a moment; and then said, desperately, "Yes, I will go."

There was a flush of colour and gladness passed over the pale face; and she lifted his hand suddenly and pressed it to her lips. Then she ran into the house, and presently reappeared with her hat and some loose white thing that she hurriedly flung round her neck. Her eyes were so bright and joyous that the Whaup looked at her with amazement.

In a secret corner the Whaup found his brothers, armed with large boughs. All set out for the moor where the bees' nest had been discovered; and the Whaup revealed to Coquette that his object in storming the nest was not merely to secure the little underground nuts of honey. A deed of vengeance had to be accomplished, and the captured bees were to aid in the task.

Now, Sir Peter and Lady Drum had driven back to Earlshope for luncheon, and were returning

along the moorland road, their host accompanying them. On their way they saw in the distance a small procession of figures on the moor, carrying branches of trees.

"Why yonder is Coquette running and laughing," said Lord Earlshope.

"Running and laughing!" said Lady Drum. "Has that dark-eyed little witch been cheating me!"

CHAPTER XV.

A dangerous Adventure.

"WHAT is the matter with you?" said the Whaup to Coquette. "For a few minutes you are alive, and in the world; and the next minute you are looking away over there at the sea, as if you could look through the Arran hills, and see something miles and miles away on the other side."

Coquette started, and recalled herself; but there was no tinge of embarrassment on the pale, clear, foreign-looking face. She said—

"I was thinking whether your papa would let us all go with Lady Drum."

"Then he has not promised to go?" said the Whaup, sharply.

The dark eyes of Coquette began to look afraid.

"It is a strange thing," said the Whaup, "that women will not tell you all the truth at once. They must keep back things, and make mysteries, and try to deceive you. Why didn't you say to me—'There is a talk of our going a trip in Earlshope's

yacht. Will you come, if we are all allowed to go?'—instead of hinting that you were all fixed on going, and I might as well join you? Well, there, I am not going to say another word. You can't help it. You are only a woman."

"And you are only a boy," she said, looking up to the tall, handsome lad beside her,—"very kind, and very generous, and very stupid."

"I am older than you, at least," said the Whaup, who did not like to be called a boy. "And, if it was any use, I'd give you the advice to drop these little tricks, and be honest with one."

"If my honesty were equal with your rudeness, I should please you," said Coquette, with a smile. She was disinclined just then to take umbrage.

"It will be a bold thing for my father to go away anywhere in the company of Lord Earlshope," observed the Whaup. "It will be only his regard for your health which will force him."

"Why?" said Coquette, with a touch of asperity.

"Well, you know the reputation he has in the parish," remarked the Whaup, coolly. "Perhaps everybody is wrong; but, at all events, Earlshope gives them every reason to think ill of him. He never comes to church; he walks about on Sundays with his dogs; or else he reads novels, and smokes cigars. If I go with you, it is not to be friends

with him; it is to protect you. Do you know, either he is mad or one of these novels has taken his head; for he has got a place built at the end of the grounds like a wizard's cave, with trickling water running over a lot of rocks, and he sits there at night to read, and in the rocks he has blue lights, that make the place look as if it was haunted."

"That is stuff and humbug," said Coquette.

"What did you say?"

"I do mean it is nonsense, if that is better. It is an old woman's story of the village—it is a fable —it is foolish."

"Very well, very well," said the Whaup. "But if you have the courage to slip out of the house to-night when it is dark, and run all the way there, I will take you in by a way that I know, and show you the place."

"Suppose he were there?" said Coquette.

"No fear. The nights are getting too cold. Will you go?"

"Perhaps," said Coquette.

By this time they had arrived at the spot of the moor where the Whaup had discovered the bees' nest. He pointed out to his companion a small hole in a piece of mossy ground which was uncovered by the heather; and as she looked at it, a large humble-bee came crawling out, paused for a

second, and then flew away with a low buzzing noise into the distance. The Whaup threw off his jacket, and took his spade in hand.

"Here," said he to Coquette, "protect yourself with this branch. Knock them down when they come near you."

"Why?" she said. "They will not harm me—I am not harming them."

"That may be the case wi' bees in France," observed the Whaup, with a sneer, "where they've better manners; but ye'll find Scotch bees have different habits."

So he ordered one of the boys to stand by Coquette and beat down any bees that might come her way; threatening him with pains and penalties dire if one should touch her. Then he struck the spade into the ground near the entrance to the nest, and raised a large "divot." The channel to the subterranean caves was now laid bare; and one or two bees that had been coming up were seen extricating themselves from the loose earth. These Dougal laid straightway hold of, by means of his handkerchief, and popped them into a large paper bag which he held.

"What for you put them in a bag?" said Coquette; at which all the boys burst out laughing. But they did not tell her the secret.

The excitement of this work of destruction now began. Out came the bees in dozens, buzzing up from the ruddy earth only to be struck down by great branches of alder borne by the boys; while the intrepid Dougal, with his face and hands quite unguarded, stood over the hole, and picked up whichever of them looked only stunned. It was a dangerous occupation; for those inside the bag which had partially recovered began to hum their discontent, and tried to escape by the small opening which admitted their companions in misfortune. Sometimes, indeed, the other boys assisted, although it was no easy matter to beat back the winged host that flew round and round their ears.

Suddenly Wattie uttered a loud shriek, and set off running as hard as he could. His companions perceived to their dismay that about twenty or thirty bees had clustered round his head, and were now following him, and hovering over him as he ran.

"He's got the queen bee on his bonnet," said the Whaup. "Throw down your bonnet—ye idiot! —throw down your bonnet!"

Wattie was still within hearing, and had sufficient nerve left him to do as he was bid. He snatched at his cap, pitched it on the heather, and again made off; but it was soon apparent that he

was out of danger. The bees had lit upon the cap; and from a safe distance he stood and regarded it with rather a rueful countenance.

The issue of bees had ceased. The boys laid down their branches, and began to dig out with their fingers, from among the red and sandy earth, the small brown combs of honey, which were speedily transferred, sand and all, to their mouth. The Whaup, of course, would not condescend to such vulgar and childish practices; but he produced a pen-knife, and extracted some honey from one of the combs, which Coquette was pleased to taste.

"What for you have bees in the bag?" said Coquette, as they prepared to go home—a simultaneous charge of branches having cleared Wattie's cap.

"I told you," said the Whaup, "there was a deed of vengeance to be done. In the stable there is a bag of corn, which Andrew opens twice a day to get some for the pony. We are going to put the bees in the bag—I suppose there's near a hundred of them. When Andrew plunges his hand into the bag——"

"O you wicked boy!" cried Coquette.

"You are the cause of it," said the Whaup.

"I?"

"I heard him calling ye all sorts o' names out

of the Bible—Satan quoting Scripture, ye know—and I have warned him before; and now he'll get it."

"The bees, they will kill him," said Coquette.

"So much the better," retorted the Whaup, "he is a nuisance."

"But what is that on your hand—that is a sting, is it not?" she said, looking at a considerable swelling, which was visible on the Whaup's fore-finger.

"Oh, one sting is nothing," he said, carelessly, "unless it's a wasp or a hornet. Did you ever burn out a nest of hornets? If you haven't, don't try it."

"No," said Coquette, simply, "I'm not such a gowk."

"Well, that is pretty English!" observed the Whaup, with a stare.

"Isn't it right? I did hear you say it yesterday," remarked Coquette, without any notion that she was turning the tables on her critic.

So they drew near home again, and the Whaup fancied a shade came over his companion's face as they approached the Manse. Perhaps it was the dull, grey day, which made the old-fashioned little place look dull and solitary—that made the moor look unusually bleak, and the long stretch of country sombre and sad.

"I hope you are not tired," said the Whaup.

"Tired? No," she said, somewhat languidly. "Do you think your papa will take us away from here for a little while?"

"How you harp on that yacht!" said the Whaup, good-naturedly. "I must go and persuade my father on your behalf, I think."

"Will you do that?" she said, eagerly.

"Yes," he said, "and just now. Isn't he there in the garden? I hear him talking. Oh, it is the Schoolmaster, who is delivering a lecture. Now, I will wager he is talking about you."

"About me?"

"Yes; don't you know you are a dangerous character to the whole village?"

"I should like to know what he says about me," said Coquette, proudly, advancing towards the wall which surrounded the garden.

"But not that way," said the Whaup, taking her hand and leading her off. "If you wish to know, you mustn't hide and listen—although I suppose that is a woman's way. You go into the Manse—I will go into the garden and bring you word what the new ground of complaint is."

Leaving Coquette, therefore, the Whaup went round the house, and boldly walked up to the place where Mr. Gillespie and the Minister stood together.

"It is Earlshope who is catching it this time," said the Whaup to himself, overhearing the name.

His father looked with some surprise on the approach of his eldest son—who had rather a pugnacious look on his face, by the way,—but the Schoolmaster was too intent upon his choice phrases to heed.

. . . "than which, sir, nothing could be more deplorable, or mortifying, as I may say," observed Mr. Gillespie. "But I would give every man the due of his actions; for, although works are not in themselves saving, they may be a sign—or, as some would term it, a symptom—of the presence o' grace, even among the Gentiles who know not the law, yet do the things that are written or inscribed in the law."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Gillespie!" said the Minister, with an impatient twitch at his bunch of seals: "but ye said ye had come to tell me——"

"Yes, sir, to inform ye of a circumstance which deserves, or is entitled to, some remark. I have been made the means—or, I may say, the humble instrument—of conveying to the people of this parish no less a sum than one hundred pounds sterling, to be expended, sir, as those who have authority among us may direct, for the good—or benefit—of such as are—such as are—such as are,

in fact, here. Ware it—or as I ought to say—expend it as we best may on the educational or worldly wants of the parish, it is all the same; and while I would observe, sir, that the money cannot heighten in value the services which you give—or rather render to this parish—it being your duty, as I may express it, to expound the prophecies and dig up spiritual gold and silver for them that are of Zion, I would take your advice wi' all humility as to how this sum is to be granted to, or bestowed upon, the parish."

Mr. Gillespie paused, with the air of a man who had been up to the occasion. He raised his large spectacles towards the Minister's face, and proudly awaited the reply.

"Where got ye this money?" said the Minister.

"Sir, from Lord Earlshope—some three days ago, with a letter dated some place in the north, in which his Lordship was pleased to say that it was but a whim of his. A noble and a praiseworthy whim, said I to Mrs. Gillespie, on receiving the money; and as I am one, Mr. Cassilis, that would argue from facts rather than from idle hearsay—or, as I might call it, rumour—I am bold to observe that there are in this very parish those who would look black at his Lordship, and yet no bestow a bawbee on the education o' the poor. I

wouldna, sir, cast—or, in other words, fling—the first stone; and if some would do as they see Lord Earlshope do, I am thinking, sir, they would not—they would not do—as—as, in fact, they do do."

Feeling that his eloquence was beginning to halt, the Schoolmaster pulled out the identical letter and cheque which had effected so extraordinary a change in his sentiments towards the owner of Earlshope. These he handed to Mr. Cassilis, who took them and scanned them with equal surprise and pleasure. The Minister even hinted that since his Lordship was so well-disposed to the parish, and apparently inclined to make up for past forgetfulness, it would be unbecoming of the parish not to meet his advances in a similar friendly spirit.

"Precisely and exactly as I observed to Mrs. Gillespie this morning, sir, not ten minutes—nay, when I recollect, not above five minutes—indeed, I am sure three minutes could not have elapsed—after the reading of the letter, or communication I might call it, seeing what it holds. And Mrs. Gillespie, sir, made an observation—couched in homely phrase—yet pertaining, or, as I might say, bearing upon this point. She remarked that the test of a man's fair words was when he put his hands in his pocket."

"It is sometimes so," said the Minister; adding,

with a sly glance at the Schoolmaster, "perhaps, after all, Mr. Gillespie, when my parishioners hear of Lord Earlshope's generosity, they will not wonder at my receiving him at the Manse, nor yet will they object to his speaking to my niece."

The Schoolmaster looked rather uncomfortable; and the Whaup, behind his back, performed some derisive and delighted antics of a vulgar nature.

"I maun e'en take a man as I find him, Mr. Cassilis," said the Schoolmaster, forgetting his English in the warmth of his self-defence. "If he alters for the better, what for should I stick to my old opinion, like a flee to the wa'?"

"Certainly, certainly," said the Minister; "but sometimes it is our judgment that is mistaken in the first case, and it behoves us to be cautious and charitable."

"No man ever accused me o' being without charity, in moderation—in moderation," said the Schoolmaster, with his spectacles glaring fiercely. "But I am no for that charity that lets ye be led by the nose. I have my own opeenions—charity is a good thing—a very good thing—but it needna make a fool o' ye, and make people believe that ye are as blind as Eli. No, sir, wi' due deference to you, I still consider Lord Earlshope to be——"

In this excitement the Schoolmaster had uncon-

sciously unfolded the cheque he held in his hands; and he now suddenly found himself looking at it. He did not finish the sentence. He waved his hand, as though to say — "These are bygones; I was right, but it is no matter; and Lord Earlshope has mended."

"And what do ye propose to do with the money?—not that there will be any difficulty in finding suitable directions," said the Minister.

"That," replied the Schoolmaster, with grave importance, "is a matter for serious—and, I may add, patient—consideration, in which, sir, I would earnestly desire your assistance and advice. In the meantime, it is but fitting (such is my humble opeenion) that acknowledgment of his Lordship's bounty should be made—and that not in a formal manner, but in a friendly—a conciliatory manner, as I may say, in which I will show his Lordship that we of this parish recognise, appreciate, and commend these approaches—or overtures they might, I think, be properly called—on his part; and who knows, sir, but that encouragement of this kind might have the effect of stimulating or exciting his Lordship to renew—I may say, in short, to repeat—these attentions of a generous nature——"

Mr. Gillespie stopped here, not sure whether he

had got to the end of his sentence or not. He then continued—

"I hope, sir, in your capacity of private friend of this young gentleman, and public and spiritual overseer of this parish, you will convey to him our sense of what he has done; and if you could bring him and the parish closer together——"

"At this present moment, on the contrary," said the Minister, with a hesitating smile, "Lord Earlshope proposes to carry me away from the parish. I have received an invite, with some members of my household, to go on a small voyage in his Lordship's yacht, Lady Drum being the instigator of the project, as I believe."

The spectacles of the Schoolmaster seemed to wax bigger.

"How do you think the parish would receive the proposal?" asked the Minister, rather timidly.

"I will make it my business to ascertain," replied the Schoolmaster, with an air of authority. "Nay, further, Mr. Cassilis, I will even go the length of advising your parishioners to acquiesce. Why, sir, it is their duty. Lord Earlshope, Mr. Cassilis, is a man to be encouraged—he *must* be encouraged."

This was all that was wanted to confirm the Minister's decision. He had for some time back seen fit to abandon the suspicions that had been

suggested by his meeting Lord Earlshope and Coquette on the moor; and the only question now was whether Coquette's health would be greatly benefited by his accepting the invitation.

The Whaup made off at this moment, and went to Coquette.

"You owe Gillespie a good turn for once," said he to her. "The old fool has persuaded my father to go."

CHAPTER XVI.

Coquette leaves Airlie.

How brightly shone the sun on the welcome morning of their departure!—when Coquette, as she looked out to catch a glimpse of the fair blue sea and the sunny hills of Arran, could scarce take time to curb the wildness of her dark hair. Already the open window let her drink in the fresh morning air; and she felt the warmth of the sun on her cheek. Generally, at her toilette, she sang, or rather hummed to herself, snatches of French songs, or even—I regret to say—endeavoured to imitate the Whaup's whistling of a Highland reel; but on this morning she was far too excited for any such amusements. The face that had been getting tired and wan of late was now flushed with happiness; and when at last she came running down stairs, and out into the gardens—her white dress fluttering in the sun, and her hair getting rather the better of the dark blue band interwoven with it—she fairly overwhelmed the boys with her demonstrations of affection and kindness.

The Whaup's brothers were practical young persons, and, though they still regarded this foreigner and Catholic as a dangerous companion —as somebody who had to be approached with caution—they had discovered, at an early period, that certain gold coins of French origin could be transformed at Ardrossan into an honest and respectable mintage. The amount of pocket-money which the reckless young woman lavished upon her cousins (excepting the Whaup, of course,) was appalling; nor could the observant Leezibeth make out whence came all the new pocket-knives, tools, and similar boyish luxuries which she discovered about the house. The boys themselves had an uneasy impression that there was something desperately wicked in having so much money, and, indeed, had many private conversations among themselves about the specious arguments with which they might cheat the devil if he happened to put in a claim for them, on account of extravagance.

"You must all be very good till I come back," she said, now, "for I am going to bring you all presents. I will buy you—what shall I buy you?"

The boys began to laugh, but rather in a disappointed way.

"There is but wan thing ye'll get to buy in the Hielands," said Dougal, "and that's herrin'."

"And too good for you," said the Whaup, coming up, "you greedy young pigs. If I hear you bargaining about presents any more I'll present ye with a bottle o' hazel oil, if ye ken what that is. Come along, Miss Coquette, and get your breakfast, and then show me what luggage you have. I dare say it's twice as big as I can allow."

"You allow? Are you the master of the luggage?"

"I am—as you'll find out," said he. "I have just taken half the pile of things that Leezibeth had packed up for my father and shunted them into a drawer. We don't mean to go to the Sandwich Islands."

"Do we go to the Sandwich Islands?" said Coquette, simply.

"I said we don't mean to go there," repeated the Whaup, with asperity, "but I suppose you don't know where that is—the French are so precious ignorant."

"Worse luck," said Coquette, with an expression of sincere penitence which made the Whaup burst out laughing.

At length, some two hours afterwards, Coquette found herself seated in the little dog-cart which had brought her to Airlie. A sour man was Andrew Bogue that day, and sourer was he now. Nor word

nor syllable would he utter; and the more vivacious and talkative Coquette became—speaking to her uncle, who sat behind, the Whaup having been sent off on foot—the deeper and sterner became the gloom of his face. Perhaps he was none the less disposed to predict evil of this appalling departure from the sober and respectable routine of the Manse, because of a severe encounter he had had with Leezibeth that morning. He saw that Leezibeth had now wholly gone over to the enemy.

When they reached the harbour and saw the shapely vessel lying out at anchor, with her sails shining in the sunlight, they perceived that both the Whaup and Lady Drum had gone on board. Presently, the pinnace was put off from the yacht, and in a few minutes Coquette and her uncle were being pulled out by the four blue-jackets. Lord Earlshope was at the gangway to receive them.

"Why does he not wear a sailor's uniform?" said Coquette to Mr. Cassilis, as they drew near. "He does not seem to care about anything."

When they stepped on board—and Coquette had looked round with wonder on the whiteness of the deck, and the scrupulous neatness everywhere visible—Lady Drum came forward, and kissed her, and said,

"My dear child, I hope you know about yachts,

for I don't, and I feel most uncomfortably in the way of everybody."

"Yes, I know very well," said Coquette.

"Why, all you have to do," said Lord Earlshope, coming forward, "is to sit in the cockpit there—an innovation I introduced for the very purpose of getting ladies out of the way during a race. You need have no fear of getting hit on the head by the boom, or of being washed overboard either; and if a wave *should* come over the stern——"

"I hope there will be nothing of the kind," said Lady Drum, looking indignantly out towards the sea.

The prospect there was sufficiently reassuring. There was a light breeze from the south-west which was just enough to ruffle the water and make it a dark blue. Overhead the sky was clear and calm; and the bluish-grey peaks of Arran were faint and aerial in the mid-day mist. Everything promised a pleasant run up to Loch Fyne, if only the breeze would last.

While the men were getting the vessel under weigh, Lord Earlshope's visitors went down below. If Coquette had been pleased with the prettiness of the yacht above, she was now charmed with the decorations of the state-rooms and saloon. The transparent flowers painted on the skylights—the

ornamentation and gilding of what she profanely called the walls—the innumerable little arrangements for comfort—all these were matter for praise; but the climax of her delight was found in a small harmonium which was placed in the saloon.

"I should have got a piano for you," said Lord Earlshope—making no secret of his having studied her pleasure in the matter—"but they don't stand the sea so well. Now, Lady Drum, will you take Miss Cassilis into your little state-room, and when you have made yourselves thoroughly at home—and got out some wrappers for the sea breezes, you know—you will find luncheon awaiting you here. Mr. Cassilis, you will take a glass of sherry, won't you? You will always find it *there*. Mr. Tom, do you shoot?"

"Should think so!" said the Whaup, who had apparently forgotten his sentiments of antagonism to Lord Earlshope..

"I thought you would. You will find my breech-loader in your cabin; and the skipper will give you cartridges if you ask him. Now, I must go on deck."

"I never thought he had so much go in him," said the Whaup familiarly to his father.

"So much what?" said the Minister, severely.

"Why, life—energy. I thought he was rather a

muff—with his white fingers, and his lazy lounge and that. But he's not as bad a fellow as people say."

"Lord Earlshope would be pleased to know that you approve of him," said his father; but the Whaup lost the sarcasm, for he had already run up the companion, to see what was going on above. His father, following, found that the Whaup had clambered half-way up the rattlings, to get a view of the surrounding scenery as the yacht stood out to sea.

When, some time after, luncheon-bell was rung, and Lady Drum and Coquette made their appearance, the latter was heard to say,

"Why don't we go away? I do not like to remain in harbour."

But the moment she entered the saloon and saw the table apparently heeling over in an alarming manner, she said—

"We are at sea?"

"Yes," said Lord Earlshope; "and missing a pretty part of the coast. So you ought to hasten your luncheon."

"But what is the matter with the table?" said Lady Drum, making an effort to put it at right angels to herself. Coquette screamed, and caught her hand.

"If you put it straight," said Lord Earlshope, laughing, "you will see everything fly to the ground." It was days, indeed, before Lady Drum could believe that this tumbling table was safe, and many a time she had to check herself from instinctively "putting it straight."

Pleasant, indeed, on that bright and quiet afternoon was their run up the broad channel between Bute and Arran. Far away the coast of Ayrshire, which they had left, became paler in the light; while on before them successive bays opened out, with silent hills overlooking them, and here and there the white glimmer of a sea bird in their shadows. Down in the south, the mountains that rise from the lovely Loch Ranza had caught some clouds about their peaks, and were black, as the mountains of Arran generally are; but all in front of them—the smooth hills of Bute and Inch Marnoch, the craggy wonders of the Kyles, the still shores of Cowal and Cantire—lay steeped in a soft autumnal haze, with the rich colours of heather and fern only half glimmering through the silver veil. It was like a voyage into dreamland—so beautiful was the land and sea and sky around them—and so still.

Such was the manner of their setting out. And in the evening they drew near the little harbour of

Tarbert; and all the west was aglow as if with fire. Even after they had dropped anchor and the mountains of Cowal were black as night, there was a pale glare over the sky and out on the broad bosom of the loch. Then through the pallor of the twilight came the stars, growing and burning in the darkness, until Coquette thought they seemed just above the points of the tall masts. She still lingered on deck, when all the others had gone below. The sails were down, lights run up, and through the skylights of the cabin came a dull yellow glow, and a sound of voices which spoke of a comfortable and happy party beneath. Why was it that she was so sad? She had had her heart's wish—she was setting out on the excursion which had hung before her longing eyes for many a day—and yet here she sat in the stern of the boat, looking up to the throbbing wonders of the heavens, or down into the starry plain of the sea, and feeling very lonely and miserable.

Lord Earlshope came in search of her.

"Why do you sit here alone?" he said.

"I do not know," said Coquette, rising wearily.

"They want you down below."

"I will go down; but it is very beautiful up here. I have never seen the stars so near. They seem to be just over the top of the hill there."

"You will have many opportunities of admiring the wonderful sunsets and the clear nights of these high latitudes. You may make the cruise as long as you please, you know."

"But you do not go with us?" she asked, with some little embarrassment.

"For a day or two, to give you a start. Unless I am found to be so useful that you all ask me to stay."

"Perhaps, then, you will come all the way with us?" said Coquette, somewhat too eagerly.

"Perhaps I may."

Coquette went down into the cabin then, and everybody was struck during the evening by her extreme amiability and cheerfulness. She quite won the heart of Lady Drum, who said that the effects of the sea air on the young lady were surprising and gratifying, and needed only to be supplemented by a little gentian.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lochfyne.

"It is Eden: it is the Garden of the Lord!" said the Minister; and the sad and sunken eyes that had grown dim over many books—that had grown weary, too, perhaps, with the bleakness of the upland moor—looked abroad over one of the fairest scenes in the world, and drank in the quiet and the clear sunshine of it. Far in front of him stretched the pale-blue plain of Lochfyne, that was as still, and smooth, and glass-like as the pale-blue sky above. From this point of the Knapdale shore away up to the fork of Loch Gilp there was not a ripple on the calm surface; but over at the opposite shore of Kerry a slight breeze was bearing up from the south, and there the blue of the water was intense and almost dark. Beyond this plain of blue lay the brown and ruddy colours of the Kerry hills —soft and smooth in the mist of the heat—while along them moved great dashes of shadow thrown by the slowly-passing clouds above. Through the

stillness of the sunshine they heard the soft whistle of the curlew—and saw the solan flap his heavy white wings far down towards Arran—and watched the solitary heron standing among the brown weeds out at the point of the shore — while now and again a salmon-trout would leap a foot into the air, and fall with a splash again into the clear water. Then all around them, where they sat on the pebbly beach, was the drowsy warmth of the sun—glittering on the birch and hazel bushes by the road—gleaming on the great grey boulders—and falling mistily on the bushes, and heather, and rocks of the hill-side. And all this was so still that it scarcely seemed to be of this world; and the murmurs of a stream coming down from the hill-side through the trees—trickling coolly and unseen beneath the tall ferns—had a far and mournful sound, like the sound of distant music in a dream.

The stillness was broken by Coquette trying to whistle "The Last Rose of Summer." Then she uttered a little cry of delight as she saw Lord Earlshope and Lady Drum coming along the road underneath the trees; and when at length they had drawn near and had come down to the shore, Coquette said—

"Please, Lady Drum, will you tell me why my uncle becomes sad when he sees a pretty day and

a pretty place. The good weather does not cheer him——"

"It cheers you, at all events," said Lady Drum, with a kindly scrutiny of the girl's face. "It gives you a colour and a brightness that makes an old woman like me feel young again only to look at ye. How have you been employing yourself?"

"I? I have been trying to whistle as my cousin whistles, but I cannot do it like him, perhaps because I have no pockets. He never is able to whistle unless he puts his hands in his pockets, and looks careless, and stands so! Then I have watched the grey heron out at the rocks there, and I have been wishing he would get a fish."

"I have been wishing I had a gun," said the practical Whaup, with obvious discontent.

"And my uncle—he has been sitting and looking far away—looking tired, too, and weary—just as if he were still in church."

"Listening to one of my own sermons, I suppose?" said the Minister, taking his niece by the ear. "I hope I have not been oppressing you with my dullness?"

"Ah, no, no!" she said. "But I did not speak to you; you were thinking of old years gone away, were you not?"

The Minister looked at the girl, and her eyes seemed to have divined what he was thinking of. But presently she turned to Lord Earlshope, and said—

"We go not to-day? We do not perhaps to-morrow either?"

"Why," said Lord Earlshope, with a smile, "you might turn your newest accomplishment to some use. Could you whistle a breeze to us? We are helpless, you see, until we get wind."

"I thought an English milord never wanted for anything that he did not get," she said, with a look of grave surprise.

The Whaup began to think that his cousin was a deal too clever to be safe.

"Would it grieve you so much to stay a few days here?" said Lord Earlshope.

"Not at all," said Coquette; "I should prefer to stay here always."

"I have had the yacht taken round to Maol-Darach Bay—that little shingly creek west of the harbour—since you complained of the smell of the herring this morning. And when you wish to go into the village you must ask the captain to send a boat with you. By the way, there will be a boat here presently for you. I thought you might be too tired to care about walking back."

"It was very kind of you to think of all that," said Coquette, timidly, and looking to the ground.

It had already come to be regarded as a matter of course that everybody should consider Coquette as of first importance, and obey her slightest whim, and anticipate her smallest wishes. But the most systematic and persistent of her slaves was Lord Earlshope himself, who seemed to have discovered a new method of passing the time in trying to please this young person by small attentions; and these he offered in a friendly and familiar way which robbed them of any significance they might otherwise have had. The small tyrant, with the dark eyes, and the delicate, finely-formed face, accepted these ministrations in that spirit of careless amiability which was natural to her. Sometimes—but rarely—she would appear to be struck by this or that act of kindness, and seem almost disturbed that she could not convey a sense of her gratitude in the broken tongue she spoke; but ordinarily she passed from hour to hour in the same happy unconsciousness and delight in the present—glad that all her friends were around her, and comfortable—glad that she could add to their enjoyment by being cheerful and merry. Selfish she certainly was not; and there was no sort of trouble or pain she would not have endured to give pleasure to those who were her friends; but

she would have been blind indeed had she not perceived that to give pleasure she had only to allow herself to be pleased—that her mere presence diffused a sense of satisfaction through the small meetings that were held in the cabin of the yacht, when the swinging lamps were lit, and the stars overhead shut out, and the amusements of the evening commenced. The Whaup used to say that she was continually making pretty pictures; and he even condescended at times to express approval of the neatness of her dress, or to suggest alterations in the disposal of her big masses of dark-brown hair.

"And in time, you know," he remarked to her, "you will get to talk like other people."

"I do not wish to talk like you," said Coquette.

"I can at least make myself intelligible," he retorted.

"Do not I become intelligible?" asked Coquette, meekly; and then, of course, the least symptom of doubt on her part disarmed the Whaup's criticism, and made him declare that she spoke very well indeed.

The measured splash of oars was now heard; and the heron slowly rose into the air with a few heavy flaps of his wing, and proceeded to settle on a farther promontory. The boat, with its four

rowers, came round the point; and in a few minutes the heavily-laden boat was on its way back to the yacht.

Coquette was delighted with Maol-Daroch Bay —she insisted upon landing at once; and she and the Whaup accordingly ran up the white shingle, and made for the hill-side. Coquette stood upon a rock that was perched high among the heathery roughnesses of the hill, and waved her handkerchief to those who had by this time gone on board the yacht. Lord Earlshope waved his cap, and Mr. Cassilis his walking-stick; Lady Drum had gone below.

"Now we shall go up this hill, and round, and round, and back by the rocks of the shore," said Coquette.

"What's the use?" said the Whaup. "I havn't a gun; and if I had, I daren't shoot up here."

"Why must you kill something wherever you go?" said Coquette.

"Why must you scramble along a hill, all for nothing, like a goat?" said the Whaup.

"Because it is something to do," said Coquette.

"You are a pretty invalid!" remarked the Whaup. "But here, give me your hand—if you want climbing, I'll give you enough of it."

"No," said Coquette, planting her foot firmly.

"I like you when you are gentle, like Lord Earlshope; but I am not going to be pulled by a big rough boy."

"I have a great mind to carry you against your will," said the Whaup, with the demon of mischief beginning to grin in his eyes.

"I would kill you if you tried!" said Coquette, with a frown.

He came forward and took her hand quite gently.

"Have I vexed you? Are you really angry, Coquette? You didn't think I was serious did you? You know I wouldn't vex you, if I got the world for it."

A certain quivering of the lip—for a moment uncertain—resolved itself into a smile—and that into a laugh—and then Coquette said—

"You are a very good boy, Tom, when you like. Somebody will get very fond of you some day."

The Whaup grew more serious then; and, indeed, it seemed to Coquette that ever after that time her cousin's manner towards her was more reserved and grave than it had been before. He did not try to drag her into his boyish pranks, as he had been wont to do. On the contrary, he himself seemed somewhat altered: and at times she caught

him in a deep reverie. He began to talk more about his coming winter studies at the Glasgow University; and was even found, on rare occasions, absorbed in a book.

He did not cease to exhibit those frank and manly ways which she had always liked; nor did he even put any marked restraint on his relations with her. He was as impertinently straightforward as ever, if the neatness of her wristbands called for commendation, or if the streak of dark blue ribbon did not sufficiently curb the wildness of her hair. But he was more serious in his ways; and sometimes she caught him looking at her from a distance, in a cold way, as if she were a stranger, and he was desirous to impress her appearance on his memory.

That evening he said to her briefly,

"Lord Earlshope and I are going to start at two to-morrow morning to go along the coast and see if we can shoot some seals."

"But why should you take trouble to kill them? Is it a pleasure to kill them?"

"Bah!" he said. "Women don't understand these things. You wouldn't hear a man ask such a question—except, perhaps, Earlshope himself—he might—he seems to think in lots of things exactly as you do."

This was said with no particular intention; and yet the girl looked apprehensive as though the Whaup had been making some complaint.

Then some time after, he remarked to her—

"I don't think wicked people seem so wicked when you come to know them."

Coquette was looking over the taffrail; she turned towards him and said calmly—

"Do you mean me or Lord Earlshope?"

"Why should you always think of him?" said the Whaup. "Would you be very angry if what I said applied to both of you?"

With that he laughed and walked away, leaving Coquette to wonder whether her cousin, too, regarded her as a wicked person.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Coquette sails to the North.

In the darkness the yellow lights of the yacht were shining on the spars and the rigging—the water that lapped against her side sparkled with stars of phosphorescent fire—and a slight wind, coming through the gloom, told of the rustling of ferns and bushes on the hillside—when certain dusky figures appeared on deck, and began to converse in whispers. The Whaup was yawning dreadfully, and perhaps wishing there was not a seal in the world; but he had proposed the adventure, to which Lord Earlshope had good-naturedly acceded, and so he felt himself bound in honour not to retract.

With their guns in their hands they got down into the little boat which was waiting for them, and the two men began to pull away gently from the yacht. The blades of their strokes struck a flash of lipht deep into the water; and the white stars of the waves burned even more keenly than the other reflected stars which, farther away, were glittering on the black surface of the sea. Towards the land

some vague and dusky forms that were scarcely visible were known to be the iron-bound coast; and in uncomfortable proximity the Whaup could hear the waves splashing in upon the rocks. There was no other sound but that and the measured fall of the oars. All overhead the innumerable stars burned white and clear; there were flickerings of the reflected light on the moving plain of the sea; and in there at the shore a vague darkness, and the dashing of unseen waves.

When they had thus proceeded a certain distance along the coast, the bow of the boat was turned shore-ward, and the men pulled gently in toward the rocks. In the starlight the outlines of the hills above now became dimly visible; but down at the shore, whither they were tending, blackness universal seemed to hide both shore and sea. The noise all around them, however, told the Whaup that they must be near land; and in a few minutes the boat was cautiously run in, one of the men jumping out and holding her bow. With a double-barrelled gun as a balancing-pole, the Whaup now found himself struggling over a series of rocks that were treacherously covered with sea-weed; while, as he got on to higher ground, the rocks increased in size, and the gaps between them were plunged in even profounder darkness. Presently he heard Lord Earlshope calling

on him to halt; and shortly thereafter the sailor, who had landed, appeared clambering over the boulders in order to take the lead.

Their course was now a sufficiently perilous one. The great masses of tumbled rock that here form the coast line appeared to go precipitately down into the sea—a great black gulf which they could hear splashing beneath them; while ever and anon they came to deep ravines in the sides of the hill, down which small streamlets could be heard trickling. Their progress along this rough coast—generally some fifty or a hundred feet above the sea—was picturesque but uncomfortable. The Whaup found that, in spite of all his wild plunges and daring leaps, the sailor distanced him considerably: and ahead of him he could only indistinctly see a black figure which sometimes rose up clear and defined against the star-lit sky, and at other times was vaguely seen to crawl along the surface of a grey shelf of rock like some dusky alligator. Now he found himself up to the neck among immense brackens; again he was plunged into some mossy hole, in which his boots were like to remain. Not unfrequently he had to go on hands and knees across some more than usually precipitous shelf; the barrels of his gun making sore work of his knuckles as he clung on to the rough surface.

Another halt was called. When the small bay around Battle Island—where the seals were expected to be found—had nearly been reached, it was determined, to prevent noise, that they should take off their boots and creep along the rocks on their stocking-soles. The stars were now paling; and, as the faint light of dawn would soon appear, every precaution was necessary that the seals should not become aware of their approach. No sooner, indeed, had the Whaup removed his boots than he danced a wild dance of exultation, so delighted was he to find that the soles of his stockings caught so easily and surely on the surface of the boulders. There was now far less risk of a sudden tumble headlong into the sea—although, to be sure, even up here among the rocks, it was not pleasant, in the cold of the night, to find one's feet go down into a pool of mossy water.

"Do you regret having come?" said Lord Earlshope.

"Regret it!" said the Whaup. "I'd wade a mile up to my neck to shoot a seal."

Then he added, with his usual frankness,

"I didn't expect you'd have been able to keep up with us."

"Why?"

"Well," said the Whaup, seeing before him

the outline of a tall, lithe, slim figure, "I didn't think you were much good for this sort of rough work."

Earlshope laughed—not very loudly.

"Perhaps not," he said; he did not think it worth while to astonish Master Tom with tales of what he had done in the way of muscular performances. "But you should not be severe on me. I rather fancy this is a piece of folly; but I have undertaken it merely to interest you."

The Whaup noticed at this moment that his companion held the heavy rifle, which he carried in a very easy and facile manner.

"You may be stronger than you look," observed the Whaup—throwing out this qualification from mere good-humour. He still retained an impression that Earlshope, with his lady-like fingers, and his pretty moustache, and his delicate jewellery, was something of a milksop.

Absolute silence was now the watchword as they advanced. There was no scraping of heels on the grit of the rocks—no clink of a trigger-guard in putting down the hand for safety's sake. In a thief-like fashion they stole along the high and rugged coast, now clambering over huge blocks of stone, and again fighting their way through fern and bush, with their heads low and their footfalls light. At

length the sailor stopped, and motioned to Lord Earlshope and the Whaup to descend. Great was the joy of the latter on perceiving that at last there was a level bit of shore towards which they were making their way. Having gone down, in a snake-like fashion, over the great boulders, they now crept downwards towards the shore, and at length took up their position behind two pieces of rock, from which they could see the channel in front of them, lying between the land and the dusky object which they knew to be Battle Island.

Very still and weird was this place in the dark of the morning, with the cold air from the sea stirring in the brushwood overhead, and with the ceaseless plash of the waves echoing all along the solitary coast. A faint film of cloud had come over the sky, and hid the stars; but in the east there seemed to be a pale, wan grey far over the dark water towards Ardlamont Point. And, by-and-by, as they sate on the cold rocks, and waited, there became visible—whence it had come no one could say—a brilliant planet, burning like gold in the grey mist above the eastern sea; and they knew that it was the star of the morning. Very slowly the grey light grew—very slowly the dark outline of Battle Island became more defined; and the black hollows of the waves that came in towards the shore had now a

pale hue between them, that scarcely could be called light.

Patiently they waited, scanning the outline of the island-rocks, and watching all the water around for the rolling of the seals. There was no sign of life. Perhaps the grey in the east was waxing stronger—it was impossible to tell, for their eyes had grown bewildered with the constant motion of the tumbling waves and the eager scrutiny of these black lines and hollows.

Suddenly there was a quick chirp just beside them, and the Whaup's heart leapt with surprise. He turned to find a sea-lark hopping quite near him; and, at the same moment that he perceived this first symptom of the awakening life of the dawn, he became aware that it had grown lighter out by Ardlamont Point.

And now, with a strange and rapid transition, as if the world had begun to throb with the birth of the new day, there arose in the eastern sky a great smoke of red—a pink mist that rose and spread as if from some great conflagration beyond the line of the sea. All in the west—by the far shores of Knapdale and up the great stretch of Lochfyne—lay a dense grey fog, in which hills and islands lay like gloomy clouds; but out there at the eastern horizon there was a glow of rose-coloured

smoke, which as yet had no reflection on the sea. And while they looked on it—half forgetting the object of their quest in the splendour of this sight —the perpetual wonder and mystery of the dawn— the red mist parted, and broke into long parallel lines of cloud, which were touched with sharp, jewel-red lines of fire; and as the keenness of the crimson waxed stronger and stronger, there came over the sea a long and level flush of dull, salmon-colour, which bathed the waves in its light, leaving their shadows an intense and dark green. The glare and the majesty of this spectacle lasted but for a few minutes. The intensity of the colours subsided; the salmon-coloured waves grew grey and green; a cold twilight spread over the sky, and with the stirring of the wind came in the new life of the day— the crowing of some grouse far up in the heather, the chirping of birds in the bushes, the calling of some solitary goat on the hill, and the slow flapping of a pair of herons coming landward from the sea.

Suddenly Lord Earlshope, who had been peering over the edge of the rock before him, touched his companion's arm. The Whaup went forward on his knees, and stealthily looked over in the direction pointed out. He could see nothing but the dark rocks of Battle Island, in the midst of the greyish-

green water. He was about to express his disappointment, when it seemed to him that the outline of a bit of rock at the end of the island was moving. Could it be the undulations of the waves which were surging all around; or was that motion of the black line the motion of an animal that had got up on it from the water?

Lord Earlshope handed his rifle to the Whaup, with a hurried gesture. But the arrangement had been that, while the one had a rifle and the other a double-barrelled fowling-piece loaded with heavy shot, the distance of the seal was to decide which should fire. Accordingly, the Whaup refused to take the rifle.

"It is your shot," he whispered.

"I don't want to kill the brute: why should I?" said Lord Earlshope, carelessly.

Even as the Whaup was in the act of putting the barrel of the rifle cautiously over the rock, he remembered what Coquette had said; and also that he had made the haphazard guess that Earlshope would probably say the same. But there was little time to think of such things. His breath was coming and going at double-quick time, and he held his teeth tight as he brought the sight of the barrel up to the line of rock. It rested there for a moment, and there was a spurt of fire—a bang that echoed

and re-echoed up among the rocky hills—and then Lord Earlshope rose, glad to be able to stretch his limbs at last.

"You have either missed altogether or shot him dead; there was no movement whatever when you fired."

"By Jove, then!" said the Whaup, with tremendous eagerness, "I have shot him dead if there was a seal there at all—for I know the muzzle of the rifle was as steady as a rock when I fired."

"We shall see presently," said his companion. "They will bring the boat up now."

Presently, the two men were seen pulling round the point, and then Lord Earlshope and the Whaup went out to the edge of the water, got into the boat, and were pulled out to the island. Very anxiously did one of them, at least, regard that small, dark promontory; but there was nothing visible. They drew nearer—they now saw the surface of the rocks clearly—there was nothing lying there.

"Very sorry," said Lord Earlshope, "but you seem to have missed."

"I didn't miss!" the Whaup insisted. "Let us land, and see."

So, at a convenient spot, they ran the boat in, and got out on the rocks, and then made their way

along to the end of the island. Suddenly the Whaup uttered a piercing yell of delight, and began to clamber along the rocks in the most reckless fashion. Lord Earlshope, following after him, found him grasping with both his hands a round-headed, fat, and limp-looking animal, which he was endeavouring to drag up to the higher platform.

"There—did I miss?" he cried.

"Well, since you have got him, what do you mean to do with him?" said Lord Earlshope, with a smile. "You have had the satisfaction of killing him, and the much rarer satisfaction of getting him after killing him—but what then?"

The Whaup dropped the seal on to the rocks again; and looked at the unfortunate beast with some disappointment mingled with his pride.

"What *do* they make of these beasts? You can't make seal-skin waistcoats out of that soapy-looking stuff?"

"You may eat him, if you like—I suppose he is not much oilier than a solan. However, we may as well lug him into the boat, and get back to Maol-Daroch. It is singular we have seen none of his companions, though."

The men approached the slippery animal with much more caution than the Whaup had displayed —they were evidently not quite sure that the

whiskered mouth might not open and proceed from a bark to a bite. He was got into the boat at last, Lord Earlshope and the Whaup followed; and again the fall of the oars was heard along the lonely coast. It was now broad daylight; and when they reached Maol-Daroch Bay, the sun was shining on the green hill-side, and on the white beach, and on the far blue plain of the sea.

Coquette was standing at the stern of the yacht as they approached, with the sunlight colouring her cheek and gleaming on the white handkerchief she waved to them.

"Have you had a success?" she said. "Oh, how very miserable you look!"

"It isn't half as meeserayble as we feel," remarked the Whaup, who was sleepy, and hungry, and stiff.

"You have not shot nothing!" said Coquette, clapping her hands, "or you would come home proud and fierce—like the old north warriors when they did come home from the sea. What is that in the boat? Ah! You shoot one?—yes! It is a beastly-looking—I mean it is hideous—horrid!"

The seal was allowed for the present to remain in the small boat, and Lord Earlshope and the Whaup came on deck. To the sleepy eyes of the Whaup, who was cold and wretched in spite of his

triumph, his cousin seemed quite offensively cheerful, and bright and comfortable.

"Have you had breakfast yet?" said Lord Earlshope.

"No," she said. "I have made friends with your captain, and he has given me two apples and a big bunch of grapes. I am sorry I have eaten all—I cannot give you one."

"Thank you," said Lord Earlshope. "I suppose your cousin will follow my example, get downstairs and have a sleep. Good-bye till luncheon time, Miss Cassilis—I presume by then we shall be up at Ardrishaig."

So they went below, and Coquette sat down, and took up a book she had been carrying with her. But she could not read, for there was sunlight abroad, and the fluttering of wind through the thin ropes that stretched up into the blue, and the ripple of the bright water all around. They were about to set out now on their voyage northward—that far wandering into the unknown Western Isles of which she had dreamed—and he had spoken no word of his leaving them. Would he go all the way, then—forgetting the half-promise that had been made—and spend all this happy time with them, afar from the dull routine-life, and the harsh-thinking people of the land? As she thought of the fair prospect

that was thus opened out before her, the pages of the book that lay in the sunshine were filled with pictures—wonderful landscapes that burned in the brightest of colours, and had the stirring of wind and of light in them. Lady Drum came on deck, and was surprised to find the girl sitting all alone, looking so wonderfully bright and happy.

"To-day we set sail," said Coquette, almost laughing with pure gladness, "and go away—away beyond all you can think of—among hills, and mountains, and the sea."

"Perhaps you would be glad not to come back?" said Lady Drum, looking into the happy face, and holding both the girl's hands.

"Yes—I should be glad not to come back—it is so pleasant here—and where we are going, will not that be far more pleasant?"

"That is what young folks always think," said Lady Drum—"always looking forward with hope in their eyes. But we who have got older, and have gone farther on the voyage—we look back."

And while these two and Mr. Cassilis were at breakfast, they heard the sails being hoisted above; and when they went on deck, they found the great breadths of white canvas lying over before a southerly breeze; and there was a hissing of water at the bow and along the bulwarks; and, while

Maol-Daroch Bay, and Tarbert, and all the rocks about were slowly receding to the south, before them there opened up the great blue breadth of Lochfyne, with the far, faint hills shining whitely in the sun.

CHAPTER XIX.

Coquette discourses.

"I THINK your cousin is very fond of you," said Lady Drum, with a good-natured smile, to Coquette. They were running up the blue waters of Lochfyne, with a light breeze keeping the *Caroline's* canvas as tight as a drum. The Whaup was up at the bow, lying prone on the deck, with the barrels of his breech-loader peeping over the bulwarks.

"Oh, yes, I am sure he is," said Coquette, seriously. "He will do anything for me—he has dared to fight disagreeable people for me—he has got into danger for me—he is very kind—and just now, look! he is trying to get for me some wild bird—I do not know its name—which has beautiful feathers."

"All that is nothing," said Lady Drum, taking Coquette's hand in hers. "Don't you think that some day or other he may ask you to marry him?"

The elderly lady who was now looking at

Coquette's face, expected—as elderly ladies do expect when they begin to tease girls about love-affairs—that her companion would blush, and protest, and be pleased, and affect to be indignant. On the contrary, Coquette said, simply and gravely—

"Yes, I have thought of that. But he is too young."

"And you also, perhaps. In a year or two he will be a man, and you will be marriageable."

"Then," said Coquette, dubiously, "it may be. I do not know, because my uncle has not spoken to me of any such thing; but he may think it a good marriage, and arrange it."

"Bless me, lassie!" exclaimed Lady Drum, in amazement. "Is it true that folk make slaves of their children in that way in France? I have heard of it; I did not believe it. In this country girls arrange their own marriages."

"That, too, is very good," said Coquette, "when it is with their parents' wish. It is of more consequence that a girl pleases her parents than herself, is it not?"

"And make herself miserable all her life?" said Lady Drum, startled to find herself arguing—in defiance of all precedent—on the side of youth against age.

"But that does not happen," said Coquette.

"Now one of my good friends in Nantes—she was told by her parents that she had to marry a young gentleman who was coming home from the Martinique, and had never been to France before. I remember she and her parents did go down by the railway to St. Nazaire, when they heard the boat had come; and a week or two after I did see Babiche—that is Isabella, you know—and oh! how proud and happy she was. And they are married, and live at Paimbœuf, just across the river; and Babiche is as happy as she can be. But then," added Coquette wistfully, "the young gentleman was very good-looking."

They were interrupted by a loud "bang!" at the bow. The Whaup had fired at some divers which were some distance off on the water; but they "ducked the flash," and Coquette was not enriched with any of their plumage. Then she resumed:

"What I do think very good is this," said Coquette, "when your parents speak of a marriage, and it is left not fixed—so that, if they die, and you are left alone, and you have no friends, there is one person who comes to you and says, 'Now I will take care of you.' And the same it is if you have got into trouble—suppose that you did become miserable through making an attachment for some one who does not care for you—there is always this

good friend who likes you, and you can marry, and forget all that is past, and be like other people for the rest of your life."

Lady Drum could scarce believe her ears. Had she been called upon to argue on the usual side, she could have repeated those admirably wise maxims which elderly ladies have at their command —(and which they never thought of obeying in their youth); but surely things were ordered differently in France when this young creature—whose soft dark eyes were apparently made to steal men's hearts away—could be found gravely arguing a business-like view of love affairs, which even a shrewd and able Scotchwoman would have scrupled to advance.

"You mean," said Lady Drum, "that French girls like their parents to choose a husband, so that, if they have an unfortunate love affair, they can still fall back on this substitute?"

"Oh, no," said Coquette; "you do say things harshly. But who knows what might happen?—and if your old *fiancé* is still faithful—and would like to marry—you make him happy, do you not?"

"And is that the *rôle* you have sketched out for your good-natured cousin?" asked Lady Drum, rather vexed with this plain enunciation of a theory

which, although it was based upon filial submission, seemed to her to have dangerous elements in it.

"Ah, no," said Coquette gravely; "I hope I shall never have to go to him and say that I am willing to become his wife only because I am miserable and unhappy. He deserves something better than that, does he not?"

"And so do you," said Lady Drum, in a kindly fashion. "You must not go anticipating misfortune for yourself in that way. You must forget the notions these French people put into your head. You will take to our simple Scotch habits—and you will marry the man you love best, and not any substitute at anybody's bidding. A pleasant courtship—a happy marriage—and an even, comfortable, respectable life, that is the custom here."

Indeed, Lady Drum's notions of romance had been derived chiefly from the somewhat easy and confident overtures made by Sir Peter while he was yet a young man, and had a waist. The gay and rotund Sir Peter at no time would have looked well in the character of Manfred; and his performance on a guitar under his mistress's window would have been but indifferent. Lady Drum knew she was as happy as most married women, and hoped that these dangerous French ideas about wild love affairs being condoned by an after-marriage with a sub-

stitute chosen by relatives, would not be translated into the uncongenial and highly matter-of-fact atmosphere of Western Scotland.

"I thought," said Coquette, "that the Scotch people were very hard in their obedience to duty —and against pleasure and comfort. Then I said to myself, 'Alas! I shall never become Scotch.' But now I do think on one point I am more dutiful than you. I would marry anybody that my uncle and all of you considered I ought to marry."

"And make love to somebody else, as is the fashion in France!" said Lady Drum, with a touch of anger.

"It is no such fashion in France," said Coquette. "It is only that the Scotch are ignorant of all people but themselves—and think nobody so good as themselves—and are suspicious."

Lady Drum's anger broke into a smile at the pretty vehemence with which Coquette fought for her countrywomen; and at this moment Lord Earlshope came on deck and asked what was the matter in dispute. Coquette caught Lady Drum's hand, and pressed it. The old Scotchwoman looked at the girl, and saw that she was quite pale—a circumstance that puzzled her not a little in after moments of reflection.

"Well," said Lady Drum, obeying Coquette's

unspoken entreaty, "we were talking about—about French schools for the most part."

Further inquiry was rendered impossible; for at this moment the yacht was running into the harbour of Ardrishaig, and there was a good deal of bustle on board. The Whaup came aft also, taking the cartridges out of his gun, and began to make vague suggestions about lunch. Finally, it was resolved that, so soon as Mr. Cassilis could be prevailed on to remove his books and writing materials from the table of the saloon, they should go down to have that meal which was troubling the mind of the Whaup, and so escape the tedium of the preparations necessary for going through the canal.

Why was Coquette so silent and *distraite* when —after a long and solemn grace from the Minister— they began to the French-looking repast which had been served for them?

"You are still thinking of the *pension*, are you not, Miss Cassilis?" said Lord Earlshope. "You should give us some initiation into the mysteries of so sacred a place. Was there anything romantic about it?"

"Our *pension* was full of mystery and romance," said Coquette, brightening up, "because of two German young ladies who were there. They introduced—what shall I call it?—exaltation. Do you

know what it is? When one girl makes another *exaltée*, because of her goodness or her beauty, and worships her, and kisses her dress when she passes her, and serves her in all things, yet dare not speak to her? And the girl who is *exaltée*—she must be proud and cold, and show scorn for her attendant—even although she has been her friend. It was these German young ladies from the Bohemian-Wald who introduced it—and they were tall and dark, and very beautiful, and many would have wished to make them *exaltées*, but they were always the first to seek out some one whom they admired very much, and no one was so humble and obedient as they were. All the *pension* was filled with it—it was a religion, an enthusiasm—and you would see girls crying and kneeling on the floor, to show their love and admiration for their friend."

"And you—were you ever *exaltée*?" asked Lord Earlshope.

"No," said Coquette, with a little shrug. "One or two of my friends did wish to make me *exaltée*, but I did laugh at them, and they were angry. I did not wish to be cruel to my friends. I did prefer to go about and be friends with everybody in the middle of so much distraction."

"And did you never exalt anybody?"

"No, it was too troublesome," said Coquette. At which Lady Drum smiled.

"It seems to me," observed the Whaup, coolly, "that it was a clever device to let a lot of girls make love to each other, for want of anybody else. It was keeping their hand in, as it were."

"It is a pity you were not there," said Coquette, graciously. "We should have been charmed to make you *exalté*."

"And do you think I'd have treated any of you with scorn?" said the Whaup, with a grin, and quite ignoring Coquette's retort. "No. Far from it. I should have——"

The Whaup glanced at his father, and paused—indeed, his father was calmly regarding him.

"You would have gone from one to the other," said Lord Earlshope, gravely, "and persuaded her that she was the victim of a hallucination."

"In worshipping me?" said the Whaup. "Well, now I call that a very good bit of sarcasm. There is no spite in it, as in women's sarcasm—but a clean, sharp sword-thrust, straight from the shoulder, skewering you as if you were an eel, and as if you had nothing to do but wriggle."

"Thomas," said the Minister, severely, "you are not accustomed to take so much claret."

"That, sir," replied the Whaup, with perfect

sang froid, "is why I am helping myself so liberally at present, with Lord Earlshope's kind permission."

Lady Drum shook her head; but Coquette laughed in her low, quiet fashion; and the Whaup familiarly nodded to Lord Earlshope, as much as to say, "Gave it to the old boy that time."

Then, having fetched hats and shawls from their respective state-rooms, they went above and got on shore, setting out to walk along the banks of the Crinan until the *Caroline* should get clear of the locks.

CHAPTER XX.

Letters from Airlie.

"Oh," said Coquette, as they walked along the winding path, with the beautiful scenery of the district continually opening up before them, "I did get two letters for you, uncle, at Tarbert, and forgot all about them. Here they are; shall I read them?"

The two letters which she produced from her pocket had the Airlie stamp on them; and Mr. Cassilis at once bade her do as she pleased. So she broke the seal of the first, and began to read aloud:

"'Honoured Sir and master in the Lord,—I tak up my pen to let ye know that I have been,'—what is this?" said Coquette.

The Minister took it from her, and continued himself:

"—that I have been stung. Atweel I wat no man ever heard me complain unnecessary-wise about my poseetion in life, which I accept with

gratitude and humeelity from the Giver of all Good —to wit the Dispenser of all Mercies at present and to come; but I maun tak the leeberty o' saying, honoured Sir, that I cannot bide in this house any langer to be treated worse than the beast that perisheth. From the fingers to the elbows—and my face and neck likewise—am I covered wi' the venomous stings o' bees, and do suffer a pain grievous, and like unto the plagues which were put on the people of Egypt for their sins. Honoured Sir, I canna bear wi' they callants any longer, as I chanced upon one o' them laughing like to split, and am aware it was a skeem to inflict this wrong and injury upon me, which I howp will cause you to inquire into, and begging the favour of a reply to say when ye are coming back—and what sore punishment will be meeted out to them that richly deserve the same—I am, your humble and obedient servant in the Lord,

"ANDREW BOGUE."

"Can it be," said the Minister, when he had read this letter aloud, "can it be that those mischievous boys have conspired to set a lot of bees to sting him?"

Coquette looked somewhat frightened, but the Whaup observed, cheerfully—

"Indeed, sir, those brothers of mine are fearful. I have done my best with them to keep them out of mischief; but it is no use. And to go and set a bees' bike at an auld man——!"

The Whaup shook his head disconsolately. His brothers were incorrigible—even he had been compelled to desist from his efforts to improve them.

"Do you hear him?" said Coquette, in a low voice, to Lord Earlshope. "And it was he himself who did plan all that about the bees, and got them, and put them in a bag."

"And then," said Lord Earlshope, aloud, to the Whaup, "the worst of it is that they go and blame you for what they do themselves; so that the whole district has got to dread you, whereas you have been trying to put down these pranks."

The Whaup turned towards Lord Earlshope, and slowly winked one of his eyes. By this time the Minister had opened the other letter, and was perusing it in silence. It ran as follows:—

"Dear and Reverend Sir,—It behoves me to accomplish, or in other words to fulfil the promise which I, as an elder in your church, made to you, on your setting forth, to make you acquaint, or familiarise you with, the events and occurrences, the state of feeling, and general condition of this parish.

Towards yourself, their spiritual governor, leader, and guide, the people do show themselves most loyal and friendly, hoping you will continue your voyages abroad to the benefiting of your health, and that you may be saved from the perils of the waters—or, as I might have said, from the dangers that encompass them who go down to the sea in ships. As for the young man who is to take your pulpit, God willing, next Sabbath, report speaks well of his forbears; but divers persons who have heard him in Arbroath, Greenock, and elsewhere, do fear that he is not severe enough in defining the lines and limits of doctrine, holding rather to the admonitory side, which does not give his hearers sufficient chance, or opportunity, to use a less pagan word, to get at his own stand-point, which is a grave, or, it might be said with safety, a serious matter; for whereas those ministers who have been long with us, and who have given proofs of their doctrinal soundness, may be permitted to deal more with reproof and exhortation, it is for the younger generation of preachers to declare themselves clearly and sharply, that the church universal may not be ensnared and entrapped in the dark, there being, I grieve to hear, a dangerous leaven of looseness in the colleges and other places where young men congregate, or, as I might say, come together. The

only news of importance, besides this subject, which I have to communicate, is that Pensioner Lamont did once more, on the night of Tuesday, become most abnormal drunk, and did dance and play his fiddle in an uproarious and godless manner in the house of Mrs. Pettigrew; and likewise that Lauchie —who is vulgarly called Field Lauchie—Macintyre's wife's bairn has been visited with the rash, which I hope will be taken as a sign of the warning finger of Providence, and cause the said Lauchie to give over, or, as I may say, abandon, his abominable and reckless conduct of walking to the town of Ardrossan every Sabbath day, and remaining there until the evening, I fear in no good company. This, dear and reverend sir, from yours to command,

"ÆNEAS GILLESPIE."

"Good news from Airlie?" asked Lady Drum.

"Yes—in a manner, yes," replied the Minister, with dreamy eyes. It was a new thing for him to hear only the distant echo of his parish.

"Your boys seem to want their elder brother to control them?" continued Lady Drum.

"Yes," said the Minister. "He prevails on them to leave the Manse quiet when he is there, though it may be only to lead them into greater mischief

elsewhere. But they will have to look after themselves now for the rest of the autumn and winter."

"Why?"

"Because Tom is returning to his studies at Glasgow," observed the Minister.

Coquette had been standing to watch some water-hens which, on the opposite bank, were scrambling about in the rushes, and she came up only in time to hear these last words.

"You are going to Glasgow?" she said to the Whaup.

"Yes," he replied, with some gravity. "I mean to work hard this winter."

"And you will not be at Airlie all the time?"

"Does that distress you?" he asked.

"Nobody but Leesiebess and her husband," said Coquette, wistfully. "It will not be pleasurable—the Manse—in the dark time of the winter, with the cold of the hill. But I am glad you do go. You will work hard; you will forget your games of mischief; you will come back more like a man; and when you tell me you have studied well, and have got—what is it called?—your certification, I will come out to meet you at the Manse, and I will have a wreath of laurel-leaves for you, and you will be the great hero of the hour."

"It is something to look forward to," said the

Whaup, almost sadly. "And when I come back will you be just the same Coquette?—as quiet and happy and pretty as you always are?"

"I do not know that I am quiet, or happy, or pretty, more than any one else," said Coquette; "but I hope I shall be always the same to you, if you come back in one year—two years—ten years."

The Whaup did not reply to that, but he said to himself: "*If she would only wait two years! In two years' time I would have worked to some purpose, and I would come home and ask her to marry me.*"

All the rest of their walk along the pretty and picturesque bank he was restless and impatient in manner—speaking to nobody, thinking much. He cut with his stick at the rushes in the water or at the twigs of the hedge, as if they were the obstacles that lay in his way towards the beautiful goal he was dreaming of. At last he got into the yacht again and went below. When the others followed, some time after, they found him busy with his books.

Coquette went to him and said:

"Why do you read? Have I offended you? Are you angry with me?"

"No, no," he said, rising and going away; "you

are a deal too kind towards me, and towards all those people who don't understand how good you are."

Coquette stood by in blank astonishment; she let him pass her and go up on deck without uttering a word.

By this time the *Caroline* was lying at anchor in Loch Crinan, and the afternoon was drawing on apace. The day had dulled somewhat, and far out among the western isles that lay along the horizon there was a faint, still mist that made them shadowy and vague. Nevertheless, the Whaup would have the skipper to give him the pinnace for a run out in quest of the guillemot plumage that Coquette had desired; and when, indeed, that young lady appeared on deck, she beheld the tiny boat, with its spritsail catching a light breeze, running far out beyond the sharp island-rocks that crowd the entrance to the natural harbour.

"It is so small a boat to go out to sea," she said to Lord Earlshope, who was following the pinnace with his glass.

Meanwhile, the Whaup had stationed himself at the prow of the small craft, steadying himself with his gun as she began to dip to the waves; while all in front and around there opened out the great

panorama of lochs and islands, between Luing and Scarba on the north, and the three dusky peaks of Jura in the south. The gloomy Sound of Corrievreckan was steeped in mist, and Dubhchamus Point was scarcely visible; but nearer at hand, in the middle of the gray and desolate sea, lay Maoile Rock, and Ris an Valle, with Ruisker and the Ledge, apparently under the shadow of the Paps. The bright little boat, despite her ballast and her cargo, went lightly as a feather over the waves; and the Whaup, whose head was far too clear to grow giddy with the heave of the bay, kept his eyes alert. There were plenty of birds about—the solitary solan poised high in the air—the heron calling from out of the twilight that hung over the distant rocks—but in vain he scanned the great heaving plain of gray waves for the special object of his quest. At last, however, they heard the cry of the birds down towards the south, and thither the small boat was directed. The sound came nearer and nearer—apparently there were dozens or hundreds of them all about—yet no feather of one of them could be seen. Then there was a swift rustle out beyond the boat—a dark moving line, rapidly crossing the waves—and the pink flame leapt from the two barrels of the Whaup's gun. The pinnace was put about, and run towards a

certain dark speck that was seen floating on the waves; while at the same moment over all the west there broke a great and sudden fire of yellow—streaming down from the riven clouds upon the dusky gray of the sea. In this wild light the islands grew both dark and distant; and near at hand there was a glare on the water that dazzled the eyes and made all things look fantastic and strange. It lasted but for a moment. The clouds slowly closed again, the west grew gray and cold, and over all the sea there fell the leaden-hued twilight again, while the bow of the boat—going this way and that in search of the dead bird—seemed to move forward into the waste of waters like the nose of a retriever.

They picked up the bird—there was but one. The Whaup was not satisfied. They could still hear the distant calling, and so they stood out a bit farther to sea—none of them, perhaps, noticing how rapidly the darkness was descending.

"There is a breeze coming," said the man at the tiller, looking far down into the southwest.

The Whaup saw nothing but a strangely black line along the misty horizon—a mere speck of deep purple. He was unwilling to go back then. Besides, both sea and sky were sufficiently calm; and

the coming breeze would just suffice to run them back to Loch Crinan.

"We had better make for the yacht, sir," said the man nearest him. "It looks bad down there."

Unwilling as he was to give up, the Whaup perceived that the thin line of black had become a broader band. He was still looking far over the mystic plain of the waves towards that lurid streak, when he seemed to hear a strange sound in the air. It was not a distant sound, but apparently a muttering as of voices all around and in front, hoarse, and low, and ominous. And while he still stood, watching with a curiosity which dulled all sense of fear, the slow widening of the blackness across the sea, a puff of wind smote his cheek, and brought the message that those troubled voices of the waves were deepening into a roar. Near the boat the sea was calm, and the darkening sky was quite still; but it seemed as though a great circle were inclosing them, and that the advancing line of storm could be heard raging in the darkness without being itself visible. In the intense stillness that reigned around them, this great hoarse, deepening tumult of sounds, seemed to find a strange echo; and then, while the men were getting the boat put about and made ready for the squall, the water in the immediate neighbourhood became powerfully

agitated—a hissing of breaking waves was held all around, and the first blow of the wind struck the boat as if with a hammer.

By this time the sail had been brailed up, and the tempest that now came roaring along the black surface of the sea smote nothing but spars and oars as it hurried the pinnace along with it. Running before the wind, and plunging into the great hollows of the waves, that seemed to be racing towards the shore, the light boat shipped but little water, except when a gust of wind drove the crest of a breaking wave across the rowers; but there came torrents of rain sweeping along with the gale, and presently they found themselves shut out from sight of land by the driving clouds. The Whaup still kept outlook at the bow; but he had long ago laid by his gun.

It was now a question of making the entrance to the Loch without running on the rocks with which it was studded; and as the boat rose and sank with the waves, and reeled and staggered under the tearing wind, the Whaup, dashing back the salt water from his eyes and mouth, and holding on to the prow, peered into the wild gloom ahead, and was near shouting joyously aloud from the mere excitement and madness of the chase. It was a race with the waves; and the pinnace rolled

and staggered down in a drunken fashion into huge black depths only to rise clear again on the hissing masses of foam; while wind and water alike —the black and riven sky, the plunging and foaming sea, and the great roaring gusts of the gale that came tearing up from the south—seemed sweeping onward for those dusky and jagged rocks which formed the nearest line of land.

Coquette was standing on deck, her one small hand clinging to the cold still shrouds, while her face, terror stricken and anxious, was fixed on the blackness of the storm that raged outside the troubled stillness of the harbour. Lord Earlshope begged her to go below from the fierce torrents of the rain; and when she paid no heed to him, he brought a heavy mantle, and covered her with it from head to foot. She spoke not a word; and only trembled slightly when the wind came in with a fierce cry from that angry warring of the elements that was going on beyond the islands.

The darkness fell fast, and yet as far as they could see there was no speck of a boat coming in from the wild and moving waste of gray. To the girl standing there and gazing out, it seemed that the horizon of the other world—that mystic margin on which, in calmer moments, we seem to see the phantoms of those who have been taken from us

passing in a mournful procession, speechless and cold-eyed, giving to us no sign of recognition—had come close and near, and might have withdrawn behind its shadowy folds all the traces of life which the sea held. Could it be that the black pall of death had fallen just beyond those gloomy islands, and hidden for ever from mortal eyes that handful of anxious men who had lately been struggling towards the shore? Was the bright young life that she had grown familiar with, and almost learned to love, now snatched away without one mute pressure of the hand to say farewell? She stood there as if in a dream, and the things that passed before her eyes had become spectral and ghastly. She scarcely knew that she heard voices. She clung to the steel ropes—and there was something like a faint "hurrah!" wafted in with the tumult of the sea—and then the vision of a face gleaming red and joyous with the salt spray and the rain—and then she knew that she was sinking, with a sound as of the sea closing over her head!

CHAPTER XXI.

Coquette is troubled.

THE gale blew hard all that evening, but towards midnight the sky cleared, and the large white moon rose wild and swift into the luminous violet vault, that was still crossed by ragged streaks of gray cloud hurrying over from the sea. All along the dark islands the mournful wash of the waves could be heard; and here, in the quiet of the bay, the wind brought a fresh and salt flavour with it, as it blew in gusts about, and swept onward to stir the birches and brackens of the hills. The Whaup sat up on deck with Lord Earlshope, who was smoking, and spoke in whispers, for all was quiet below.

"You will get up to Oban to-morrow?" asked the Whaup, after some profound meditation.

"I hope so," said Lord Earlshope.

"I shall leave you then, and go back by coach or steamer."

"Has your adventure of this afternoon frightened you?"

"Faith, no! My only fright was when my cousin fainted; and I wished, when I saw that, that every guillemot that ever lived was at the bottom of the sea. But I am getting sick of idleness."

Lord Earlshope laughed.

"You may laugh," said the Whaup; "but it is true. You have earned the right to be idle, because you are a man. For a young fellow like me, with all the world before him, it is miserable to be dawdling away time, you know."

"I quite agree with you," said his companion; "but it seems to me this discovery has come to you rather suddenly."

"All the more reason," returned the Whaup with confidence, "that it should be acted upon at once. I am going to Glasgow. I shall live in lodgings with some fellows I know, and work up my studies for the next session. There is a tremendous deal of work in me, although you might not think it, and I may not see Airlie for two years."

"Why so?"

"Because then I shall be nearer twenty-one than twenty."

"And what will you do then?"

"What shall I do then? Who knows?" said the Whaup, absently.

Next morning the weather was fine, and the

wind had calmed. The sea was of a troubled, dark, and shining blue; and the far hills of the islands were of a soft and velvet-like brown, with here and there a tinge of red or of gray. The *Caroline* was soon got under weigh, and began to open out the successive headlands and bays as she stood away towards the north.

Coquette came on deck, and looked out on the sea with an involuntary shudder. Then she turned to find the Whaup regarding her with rather a serious and thoughtful look.

"Ah, you wicked boy, to make me so fearful yesterday evening!" she said.

"But you are quite well this morning?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I am quite well," she said; and the brightness of her face and of her soft dark eyes was sufficient evidence.

"And I got you the guillemot after all," said the Whaup, with some pride. "One of the sailors is preparing both the breast and the pinions for you, and you can wear either you like."

"For your sake, when you are away in Glasgow," she said with a smile. "I did hear what you said last night to Lord Earlshope. I could not sleep with thinking of the black water, and the wind, and

the cry of the waves. And will you go away from us now altogether?"

"I must go away sooner or later," said the Whaup.

"But it is a little time until we all go back. Your father, he cannot remain long."

"But I have become restless," said the Whaup, with some impatience.

"And you are anxious to go away?" said Coquette. "It is no compliment to us; but no, I will not speak like that to you. I do think you are right to go. I will hear of you in Glasgow; I will think of you every day; and you will work hard, just as if I could see you and praise you for doing it. Then, you know, some day a long way off, it may be a rainy morning at Airlie, or perhaps even a bright day, and we shall see you come driving up in the dog-cart——"

"Just as you came driving up a few months ago. Does it not seem a long time since then?"

"Yes, a long time," said Coquette; "but I do think this is the best part of it."

The attention of everybody on deck was at this moment directed to the strange currents through which the *Caroline* had now to force herself—long stretches and swirls in an almost smooth sea, with here and there a boiling-up into a miniature whirl-

pool of the circling waters. These powerful eddies caught the bow of the boat, and swung it this way or that with a force which threatened to jibe the sails; while now and again she would come to a dead stop, as though the sea were of lead. And far away on their left, between the misty hills of Jura and Scarba, lay the treacherous Corryvreckan, dreaded of fishermen, whose wild legends seem scarcely in consonance with the apparent quietude of those long and curling tides. But here at hand there was sufficient evidence of the power of those glassy swirls, the outline of which was marked with streaks of foam. Slowly but steadily the *Caroline* made head through those fierce currents, drawing away from the still breadth of Loch Shuna, and getting further into Scarba Sound, with the desolate island of Luing on their right. How strangely still lay the long, lone bays and the solitary stretches of shore in the sunlight! There was not even a fisherman's boat to be seen along those bleak coasts, that seemed to have grown gray and mournful with looking out on the sadness of the sea. There was no sign of life abroad but the hovering in mid-air of the white gannet, or the far and rapid flight of a string of wild ducks sinking down towards the southern horizon. But as they drew near the mouth of Scarba Sound—with the great stretch of Loch

Linnhe opening up before them, and the mighty shoulders of the Mull mountains lying faint and gray in the northwest—the solitude grew less absolute. Here and there a boat became visible. They passed the Slate, and drew near the quarries of Easdale; while a long streak of smoke beyond told them that the great steamer from the North was coming down with her cargo of English tourists from the moors and lochs of Inverness.

"We shall get the waves of that dreadful steamer when she passes," said Lady Drum.

"Why, you don't know what a good sailor you are," said Lord Earlshope. "We had bigger waves in coming into Loch Fyne, and you were quite comfortable."

"To tell the truth, I must praise the *Caroline* for being the most humane and delightful of yachts," said Lady Drum. "One would think, to judge by the way in which she avoids those frisky and unpleasant tricks of many boats, that she was a grave and elderly person like myself, instead of being a young thing like Miss Cassilis here."

"I see a very good opening for a compliment," observed the Whaup, looking from Lord Earlshope to his father; but neither took the hint; and so the *Caroline* sped on her way, and the great steamer, with its throbbing paddles and its volumes of smoke,

came out from Easdale Bay and bore down upon them.

They were all on deck when the steamer passed; and doubtless the people who crowded the larger vessel regarded the little group in the stern of the graceful, white-sailed yacht as sufficiently picturesque —the tall and grayhaired lady, who had her hand inside the arm of the young girl; the elderly Minister, looking grave and dignified; Lord Earlshope, seated carelessly on one of the hatch-ways; the Whaup waving a handkerchief in reply to more than one signal of the same kind.

"To-morrow morning," said the Whaup to Lady Drum, "I shall be on board that steamer, going straight down for Crinan; and you—you will be turning towards Skye, I suppose, or Staffa, or Lewis?"

"What do you mean?" said his father.

"Has nobody told you? I am going back to Airlie to-morrow, and on to Glasgow, to prepare for the classes. I have had enough idling."

"I am glad to hear it," said the Minister, in a tone which did not betray any strong assurance that the Whaup was to be trusted in these his new resolves.

But Coquette believed him. All the rest of that day, as the *Caroline* glided through the dark-

blue plain of the waves—on past Ardencaple and Barnacaryn, and the steep hills above Loch Feochan, until she had got through the Sound of Kerrara, and was nearing the calm expanse of Oban Bay—the Whaup perceived that his cousin was almost elaborately kind and attentive to him, and far more serious and thoughtful than was her wont. He himself was a trifle depressed. Having definitely stated his intentions, he would not show weakness at the last moment, and draw back from his promised word; but it was with rather a heavy heart that he went below to gather together his books and put them in order for the last time on board.

"I think I shall sleep to-night on shore," said he, when he reappeared.

"Why?" asked Coquette.

"Because I don't wish to have you all up by seven to-morrow morning. The boat goes at eight."

"And must we not see you off, and say good-bye?"

"What's the use?" said the Whaup.

Coquette put her hand on his arm, and said, rather shyly:

"I think you would rather come with us. Why not do that? It is very sad and miserable your

going all away back by yourself, and I am sorry to think of it, far more for you than if it were for myself. It is very hard lines."

The Whaup laughed in spite of his wretchedness.

"I told you ever so long ago not to say that," he said, "and you promised not to forget. Never mind. It's very good of you to concern yourself about me; but I mean to go to-morrow morning. And look there!—there is Oban."

"I do hate the place!" said Coquette, petulantly.

She would scarcely look at the semicircle of white houses stretching round the blue bay, nor yet at the hills and the villas upon them, nor yet at the brown and desolate old castle built high on the rocks beyond.

"It is a town," she said, "that row of bare and ugly houses, and the hotels, and the shops. It is not fit for these Highland mountains; it shames them to look down on it—it is so—so dirty-white and shabby."

"What ails ye at the town?" said Lady Drum, who did not like to hear her favourite Oban disparaged.

"A little while ago you would have found Oban quite a grand place," said Lord Earlshope—"quite a gay and fashionable place."

"Fashionable!" said Coquette, with that slight elevation of the eyebrows and the almost imperceptible shrug to which they had all got accustomed. "Fashionable! Perhaps. It is a good promenade before the grocers' shops—and do the ladies who make the fashions live in those dirty-white houses? What is it that they say?—*Qui n'est pas difficile, trouve bientôt un asile.*"

"You know the other French proverb?" said Lord Earlshope—"*Jeune femme, pain tendre, et bois vert, mettent la maison en désert.*"

"That is possible," said Coquette, "but it is not fashion. You should see Biarritz, Lady Drum, with its sands, and the people, and the music, and the Bay of Biscay, and the Spanish mountains not far. Even I think our little Le Croisic better, where mamma and I lived at the *Etablissement.* But as for this town here, if it is more pleasant-looking than Ardrossan, I will blow me tight!"

The Whaup shrieked with laughter, and Coquette looked puzzled, knowing she had made some dreadful blunder, but not very certain what it was. Lady Drum rescued her from confusion by carrying her off to dress for dinner, and explained to her in their common state-room that she must be careful not to repeat colloquialisms which she had overheard without being quite sure of their propriety.

Indeed, when the meaning of the phrase was explained to her, she laughed as much as the Whaup had done, and entered the saloon, where the gentlemen were waiting, with a conscious look on her face which considerably heightened its colour.

"It was you to blame," she said to the Whaup; "I did often hear you say that."

"*Propria quæ maribus*," said he, and they sat down to dinner.

It was felt to be a farewell celebration. The Whaup looked grave and determined—as if he feared he would be moved from his resolution. Coquette stole furtive glances at him; and wondered what she could give him to take with him as a keepsake. The Minister furnished him with directions about certain things to be done at Airlie; Lady Drum made him promise to come and see her when she went to Glasgow; and Lord Earlshope persuaded him to remain on board that night and go ashore in the morning.

When they went on deck after dinner, it was a beautiful clear night, with the moonlight throwing a great flood of silver across the bay from over the dusky island of Kerrara. The windows of the houses on shore were burning yellow in this cold white radiance; and here and there in the bay the green or red lights of a dark-hulled boat flickered

on the smooth water beneath. Over the town the great shoulders of the hills were touched with a pale and sombre gray; but a keener light shone along the white fronts of the houses close by the shore; while nearer at hand it touched the masts and spars of the various boats, and threw black shadows on the white deck of the *Caroline* when any one moved across the cold steel-blue glare.

"Where is Miss Cassilis?" said Lady Drum, when she had taken her accustomed seat.

At the same moment they heard the first soft notes of the harmonium, and presently there rose into the still night the clear, and sweet, and melancholy cadence of Mendelssohn's gondola-song. The empty silence of the bay seemed to grow full of this rich and harmonious music, until one scarcely knew that the sounds were coming from that open cabin skylight which gleamed an oblong patch of yellow fire in the dusk. The night seemed to be as full of music as of moonlight—it was in the air all around—a part of the luminous loveliness of the sky, and scarcely to be distinguished from the lapping of the water along the side of the boat. Far away there was a murmur of the sea upon the shores of Kerrara; but that, too, became part of the sweet, and distant, and sad music that they heard. But suddenly she changed the key, and

with sharp and powerful chords struck out the proud and ringing melody of "Drumclog." The old Scotch psalm-tune stirred the Whaup, as a trumpet might stir the heart of a dragoon. He rose to his feet, and drew a long breath, as if the plaintive gondola-music had been stifling him.

"What a grand tune that Drumclog is," he said. "It means business. I dare say the old troopers sang it with their teeth set hard, and their hand on their musket-barrels. But did you ever hear it played like that?"

"It is wonderful—wonderful!" said the Minister, and his sad gray eyes were fixed upon the far white sea, and the shadows of the lonely island.

You should have seen the Whaup the next morning, bustling about with a determined air, and making, from time to time, a feeble effort to whistle. Coquette had been up before any one on board, and now sat, mute and pale, watching his preparations. Sometimes she turned to look towards the quay, where the vessels lay under the ruddy and misty sunlight of the autumn morning.

Then the great steamer came round the point. The Whaup jumped into the pinnace after having shaken hands with everybody and the boat was pushed off.

"Stop a moment," said Coquette, "I do wish to go with you to the steamer."

So she, also, got into the small boat; and together they went in to the quay, and got ashore. The steamer arrived, and the Whaup—still trying at times to whistle—got on board. The first bell was rung.

"Good-bye," said Coquette, holding one of his hands in both of hers. "You will write to me often, often; and when I go back to Airlie I will write to you every week, and tell you what is going on with all the people—even with Leesiebess also. And I will go to see you at Glasgow, if you will not come to Airlie before you have become a great man."

A few minutes afterwards the Whaup was waving his handkerchief to her as the steamer steamed away down by Kerrara, and Coquette stood on the quay, looking wistfully after the boat, even until the clouds of smoke had become a luminous brown in the morning sunlight.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the Seashore.

"I WISH to speak to you a great secret," said Coquette to Lord Earlshope that morning, "when we shall have the chance. It is very important."

"I shall remember to make the chance," said he, "especially as Lady Drum wants to go round and see Dunstaffnage. You must come with us."

The Minister preferred to remain in the yacht. The fact is, he was composing a sermon on the judgment that befell Jonah, and was engaged in painting a picture of the storm with powerful colours borrowed from his experiences in Crinan Bay. He was very busy with the task; for he hoped to be able to preach the sermon next day—being Sunday—to the small congregation on board. So it was that the others started without him; and drove over in a hired trap by the road which leads past the pretty Lochawe. In time they arrived at Dunstaffnage, and made their way on to the rocks which there rise over the blue sea, and look across to

the far mountains of Lismore and Morven, and Mull.

Lady Drum was a brisk and active woman for her age; but she did not care to exert herself unnecessarily. When they had gone up and looked at the ruins of the old castle, when they had passed through the small wood, and reached the line of alternate rock and beach fronting the sea, she placed herself upon an elevated peak, and allowed the young folks to scramble down to the white shingle below. There she saw them both sit down on the beach—Lord Earlshope beginning to pitch pebbles carelessly into the sea. She could hear the murmur of their talk, too, but could not distinguish what they said. Apparently there was nothing very important engaging their attention, for they did not even look at each other, and Lord Earlshope was evidently more interested in trying to hit a piece of seaweed which the tide had drifted in to the shore.

"My secret is this," said Coquette. "Do you know that papa and mamma did leave me a good deal of money?"

"I was not aware of it," said Lord Earlshope, making another effort to hit the seaweed.

"Oh, I am very rich—that is to say, not what you English would call rich, but rich in my country.

Yet I cannot use the money. What good is it to me? Mamma gave me more jewellery than I need —what am I to do with my money?"

"I don't know much about lady's expenses," said Lord Earlshope. "But if you want to get rid of this burden of wealth, why not keep a yacht, or buy a theatre, or——"

"No, no, no," she said. "You do not understand. I mean I have nothing to do with my money for myself. Now, here is my cousin who goes to Glasgow to live by himself in lodgings, perhaps not very pleasant. His father is not rich. He must work hard; and your northern winters are so cold. *Bien!* How I am to give him money?"

"That is the problem—is it?" said Lord Earlshope. "I might have guessed you did not wish to spend the money on yourself. Well, I don't know. I give it up. If he were a boy, you see, you might send him a *20l.* note now and again, which most of us have found very acceptable at college. But you would insult your cousin if you sent him money bluntly like that. Besides, you would destroy the picturesqueness of his position. Our Scotch colleges are sacred to the poor student; they are not seminaries for the teaching of extravagance and good manners, like the English universities."

"Then you cannot help me?" said Coquette.

"Oh, there are a hundred indirect ways in which you could be of service to him; but you must be careful, and consult with Lady Drum, who is going to Glasgow, and will probably see him there. How fortunate you are to have no care whatever on your mind but the thought of how to do other people good. You are never anxious about yourself; you seem to be surrounded by a sort of halo of comfort and satisfaction; and annoyances that strike against the charmed circle are blunted and fall to the ground."

"That is a very nice and pretty speech," said Coquette, with a smile. "I will soon believe the English are not a barbarous nation if you make such long compliments."

"I wonder," said Lord Earlshope, looking away over the sea, and apparently almost talking to himself, "whether, if I were to tell you another secret, it would annoy you in the least. I do not think it would. How could it matter to you?"

"But what is it?" said Coquette.

"Suppose," said he, throwing another pebble at the bit of seaweed, "that I were to tell you, first, that you had no need to be alarmed, that I did not mean to frighten you with a proposal, or any nonsense of that kind; and then tell you that I had fallen in love with you? Suppose I were to do that,

and tell you the history of the thing, it would not trouble you in the least, would it? Why should it, indeed? You are not responsible—you are not affected by the catastrophe—you might be curious to know more about it, even, as something to pass the time."

He spoke with the most absolute indifference, and so pre-occupied was he that he did not even look at his companion. The first start of surprise had given way to a mute and apprehensive fear; her face was quite pale, and she did not know that her two hands were tightly clasped in her lap, as if to keep them from trembling.

"Such is the fact, however," he continued, just as if he were describing to her some event of yesterday, of which he had been an interested spectator. "You cannot be nearly so surprised as I am; indeed, I don't suppose you would think anything about it, unless you considered it as a misfortune which has happened to me, and then you will, I hope without laughing, give me the benefit of your sympathy. Yet I am not very wretched, you see; and you—you are no more affected by it than if you were the moon, and I, according to the Eastern saying, one of the hundred streams looking up to you. I am afraid I have been experimenting on myself, and deserve the blow that has fallen. I have been flying

my kite too near the thunder-cloud; and what business had a man of my age with a kite?"

He shrugged his shoulders—quite without bitterness of spirit. It was a misfortune, and to be accepted.

"I am very sorry," she said, in a low voice.

"No!—why sorry?" he said. "I fancied I was more philosophical than I am. I think my first sentiment towards you was merely idle curiosity. I wished to see how so rare an exotic would flourish when transplanted to our bleak Scotch moors. Then you allowed me to make your acquaintance; and I believed myself filled with the most paternal solicitude about your welfare. Sometimes I had doubts —sometimes I made experiments to solve them. If I were to tell you how I fought against the certainty that I had become the victim of an affection, foolish, hopeless, unreasoning, you would, perhaps, understand why I think it better to tell you frankly so much as I have done, by way of explanation. You might also be amused, perhaps, if you cared for recondite studies. To me it has been very odd to find that, after I had dissected every sensation and analysed every scrap of emotion I experienced, another being has sprung into existence by the very side of my lecture-table. That other being is also I—looking with contempt at my own anatomical

experiments. And there is yet a third I—now talking to you—who looks as a spectator upon both the anatomist and the spectral being who has escaped his knife. Do you understand all this?"

A stone fell close beside them, and Coquette's heart leaped up at the sound. It had been pitched down by Lady Drum as a signal that she was impatient.

"Yes, I understand it all," said Coquette, still in the same low voice, "but it is very dreadful."

"Then it is not amusing," said Lord Earlshope, offering his hand to raise her up. "I beg your pardon for boring you with a psychological conundrum. You are not vexed about my having mentioned it at all?"

"Oh, no," said Coquette; but the beach, and the sea, and the far mountains, seemed insecure and wavering; and she would fain have had Lady Drum's arm to lean upon.

"How could you be vexed, indeed, except by the dulness of the story?" said Lord Earlshope, cheerfully. "You may consider, if you like, that you never heard my confession. It cannot affect you; nor need it, indeed, in the slightest degree, affect our relations with each other. Do you agree with me?"

"*Oui*—yes, I mean—it will be quite the same between us as before," said Coquette.

"You will not find me torture you with the jealousies of a lover. I shall not scowl when you write a letter without showing me the address. I shall not even be angry if you enclose flowers in it. We shall be to each other, I hope, the friends we have always been; until I have quite recovered my equanimity. And you will not make me the butt of your ridicule during the process?"

"I shall always be very sorry that this has happened," said Coquette.

"Why, of course!" said her companion. "Didn't I say so? You are sorry, because it is my misfortune. Had it been your own, you would not have cared. In return, when you fall in love—perhaps with your handsome cousin, let us say, who means, I know, to come back crowned with laurels in order to win for himself a pretty wife somewhere down in Ayrshire—I will do my best to become sorry for you. But then, in your case, why should anybody be sorry? To fall in love is not always a misfortune—at least, I hope there are some who do not find it so."

For the first time he spoke sadly; and the expression of his face conveyed that he was thinking of some distant time. When Coquette and her

companion rejoined Lady Drum, they were both unusually silent. As for the young girl, indeed, she was anxious to get once more into the wagonette, and have the horses' heads turned towards Oban. In the rumble of the wheels along the road there was not much occasion to talk; and very little indeed of the beautiful scenery, on that calm and bright autumn morning, did Coquette see as they passed over the neck of land towards Oban Bay.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Coquette begins to Fear.

"UNCLE," said Coquette, directly they had returned to the yacht, "when shall we go back to Airlie?"

The Minister looked up in a surprised and dazed way from his MSS., and said—

"Go back?—yes—I have been thinking of that too—for it is not fitting that one should be away from the duties to which one has been called. But you—don't you understand that it is for your sake we are here? Are you so much better? What does Lady Drum say?"

The Minister had now so far brought himself back from the sermon on Jonah that he could attentively scan his niece's face.

"Why," said he, "you are more pale—more languid—now than I have seen you for many days. Will not a little more of the sea-air make you feel strong?"

"I am not unwell," said Coquette, with the same air of cold restraint, "but if it will please you to go farther with the boat, then I will go too."

So she went away to her own cabin, fearing to go on deck and meet Lord Earlshope. In their common state-room she encountered Lady Drum.

"You two were deeply occupied," she said, with a grave and kindly smile, "when ye forgathered on the beach."

"Yes," said Coquette, with an anxious haste, "I did speak to Lord Earlshope about my cousin in Glasgow."

"It must have been an interesting subject, for ye never took your eyes from watching the toe of your boot, which was peeping from under your dress; and he, I am sure, would not have noticed a man-of-war had it come round the point. Dear, dear me! I willna scold you; but to come so soon, ye know, after your poor cousin left ye——"

"No, no, no!" said Coquette, hurriedly, as she took her friend's hand in hers; "you must not talk like that. You do not know that I have just been to my uncle to ask him to go home."

Lady Drum began to look more serious. She had been bantering the young girl in that fashion which most elderly people love; but she had no idea that she was actually hitting the mark. This sudden wish on the part of Coquette to return to Airlie—what could it mean? Considerably startled,

the old lady saw for the first time that there was real danger ahead; and she asked Coquette to sit down and have a talk with her, in a voice so solemn that Coquette was alarmed, and refused.

"No," she said, "I will not talk. It is nothing. You imagine more than is true. All that I wish is to leave this voyage when it pleases you and my uncle."

But Lady Drum was not to be gainsaid; she felt it to be her duty to warn Coquette. Lord Earlshope, she said, was a man whom it was necessary to understand. He had been accustomed to luxurious indolence all his days, and might drift into a position which would compromise more than himself. He had a dangerous habit of regarding himself as a study, and experimenting on himself, without reflecting that others might suffer. Then, again, he had so resolutely avoided introductions to rich and charming young ladies who had visited Castle Cawmil, that she—Lady Drum—was convinced he had some rooted aversion to the consideration of marriage—that he would never marry.

"Have ye never heard him talk about marriage, and the mistakes that young men make? He is as bitter about that as if he was an old man of sixty, or as if he had made a foolish marriage himself. Perhaps he has," she continued, with a smile; "but

his success in concealing it all these years must be a credit to him."

"All that does not concern me," said Coquette, with a sort of piteous deprecation in her tone. "Why do you speak to me about Lord Earlshope's marriage? I do not care if he has been in fifty marriages."

"Will you tell me why you are suddenly anxious to go home?" said Lady Drum, bending her grave and kind eyes upon the girl.

"I have told you," said Coquette, with a touch of *hauteur* in her voice, as she turned abruptly away and walked out.

She stood at the foot of the companion-steps. Which way should she choose? Overhead she heard Lord Earlshope talking to the skipper, who was getting the yacht under canvas to resume the voyage. In the saloon sat her uncle, deep in the intricacies of Scotch theology. Behind her was the elderly lady from whom she had just broken away with a gesture of indignant pride. For a minute or two she remained irresolute, though the firmness of her lips showed that she was still smarting from what she had considered an unwarrantable interference. Then she went gently back to the state-room door, opened it, walked over to where Lady Drum sat,

and knelt down penitently and put her head in her lap.

"I hope you are not angry or offended with me," she said, in a low voice. "I am very sorry. I would tell you what you ask, but it is not my secret, Lady Drum; I must not, indeed, tell you. It is because you are so good a friend that you ask; but—but—but it is no matter; and will you help me to go back soon to Airlie?"

"Help you?—yes, I will," said Lady Drum, in the same kindly way, although it was but natural she should feel a little hurt at having her curiosity baffled. She put her hand in a gracious and stately fashion on the young girl's head, and said: "You have a right to keep your own secrets if you choose; far be it from me to ask you to give them up. But should you want to confide in a person who has some experience o' life, and is anxious to do ye every service, you have but to come to me."

"Oh, I am sure of that," said Coquette, gratefully. "I will be as your own daughter to you."

"And about this going back," continued Lady Drum. "It would look strange to turn at this point, just after letting your cousin go home by himself. We shall hae the best part o' the thing over in a couple o' days, when we get up to Skye; and then, if ye like, we can go back by the steamer."

"Two more days!" said Coquette, almost wildly, as she started to her feet—"two more days! How can I bear——"

She caught herself up, and was silent.

"There is something in all this that ye keep back," said Lady Drum. "I dinna blame ye; but when it suits ye to be more frank wi' me ye will no find yourself wi' a backward friend. Now we will go upon the deck and see what's to the fore."

Coquette was glad to go on deck under this safe-conduct. Yet what had she to fear? Lord Earlshope had made a certain communication to her with the obvious belief that she would treat it as a matter of no importance to herself. Was she not, according to his own account, surrounded by a halo of self-content which made her independent of the troubles which afflicted others?

"But I am not selfish," she had bitterly thought to herself as they were driving back to Oban. "Why should he think I have no more feeling than a statue or a picture? Is it that the people of this country do not understand it if you are comfortable and careless for the moment?"

When they now went on deck Lord Earlshope came forward as though he had utterly forgotten that conversation on the beach at Dunstaffnage, and placed Coquette and her companion in a position

so that they could see the bay and the houses, and the rocks of Dunolly, which they were now leaving behind. Coquette bade good-bye to Oban with but little regret. Perhaps she was chiefly thinking that in a few minutes they would come in sight of that curved indentation of the coast which would remind Lord Earlshope of what had occurred there. And, indeed, as they opened out Loch Etive, and stood over towards the Sound of Mull, with the dark mountains of Appin in the north, and the blue waters of the Atlantic stretching far into the south, they actually came in sight of those tiny bays which they had visited in the morning.

"Do you recognise the place?" asked Lord Earlshope, carelessly, of Lady Drum.

Then he turned to Coquette and bade her admire the beautiful and soft colours of the Morven mountains, where the sunlight brought out the warm tints of the rusty breckan and the heather, through the pearly gray of the mist and the heat. Very lovely, too, were the hills of Lismore and Lorne, dappled with cloud-shadows moving across their great shoulders and deep valleys, while over on their left rose the darker mountains of Mull, bare, and blue, and solitary. All around them, indeed, lay this great panorama of jagged mountain and smoother hill, with dark stretches of forest here and

there, and at their base the great and breezy plain of the sea, with its white line of foam along the rocks, and the monotonous cry of its breaking waves.

"It is very lonely," said Coquette, looking wistfully round the far shores; "I do not see any sign of life among those mountains or near the sea."

"You would not enjoy a long visit to these places," said Lord Earlshope, with a smile. "I imagine that the constant sight of the loneliness of the mountains would make you miserable. Does not the sea look sad to you? I have fancied I noticed a sense of relief on your face when we have settled down in the evening to a comfortable chatter in the cabin, and have shut out for the night the sea, and the solitary hills, and the sky."

She did not answer, nor could she understand how he spoke to her thus, with absolute freedom of tone and manner. Had she dreamed all that had happened under the ruined walls of Dunstaffnage? She only knew that he was looking at her with his accustomed look of mingled curiosity and interest, and that he was, as usual, telling her of his speculations as regarded herself. Or was he only assuming this ease of manner to dissipate her fears and restore their old relations? Was he only feigning indifference in order to remove her constraint?

It was not until the afternoon, when they had gone up through the Sound of Mull, and were drawing near to their anchorage in Tobermory Bay, that he had an opportunity of speaking to her alone. Lady Drum had gone below, and Coquette suddenly found herself defenceless.

"Come, Miss Cassilis," he said, "have it out with me now. You have been avoiding me all day, to punish me for my foolish disclosure of this morning. Is that the case? Did I commit a blunder? If I did, you must pardon me; I did not fancy you would have wasted a second thought on the matter. And, indeed, I cannot afford to have you vexed by my indiscretion; it is not natural for you to look vexed."

"If I am vexed," she said, looking down, and yet speaking rather warmly, "it is to hear you speak of me so. You do seem to think me incapable of caring for any one but myself; you think I should not be human; not interested in my friends, but always thinking of myself; always pleased; always with one look, like a picture. It is not true. I am grieved when my friends are grieved—I cannot be satisfied and pleased when they are in trouble."

"Surely you have no need to tell me that," he said. "When your face is clouded with cares, I know they are not your cares, and that you are far

too ready to accept the burden of other people's trouble. But I maintain you have no right to do so. It is your business—your duty—to be pleased, satisfied, contented; to make other people happy by looking at your happiness. It is natural to you to be happy. Why, then, should you for a moment suffer yourself to be annoyed by what I told you this morning? I see I made a mistake. You must forget it. I fancied I might talk to you about it without its troubling you more than the looking at a new vessel on the horizon would trouble you——"

"And you believe me, therefore," she said, with some indignation in her voice, "a mere doll—a baby, to be pleased with a rattle—and incapable of understanding the real human trouble around me? Perhaps you are right. Perhaps I do not care for anything but my own pleasure, but it is not flattery to tell me so."

With that she walked away from him and rejoined Lady Drum, who had again come on deck. Lord Earlshope had no further chance of speaking a word to her. At dinner, in the evening, Coquette was silent, and her face was downcast and troubled. When she spoke, it was to Lady Drum, towards whom she was obediently and almost anxiously attentive.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Touching certain Problems.

VERY singular in appearance was the small congregation grouped on the deck of the *Caroline*, to listen to Mr. Cassilis' sermon, on that quiet Sunday morning. The Minister himself stood erect and firm, with his gray hair—for he was bare-headed—and his sunken face touched with the misty glow of the early sunlight. Almost at his feet sat Lady Drum and Coquette, the latter sometimes wistfully looking away over the calm sea, towards the Calve Island or the distant shores of Loch Sunart. Lord Earlshope sat by himself still farther aft, where he could catch the outline of Coquette's face as she turned to look up at the Minister. And then forward were the sailors, a small group of bronzed and sturdy men, lying about in a listless and picturesque fashion, with their scarlet caps gleaming in the sun. The background was the smooth waters of the bay, with a faint blue smoke rising mistily into the still air from over the scattered houses of Tobermory.

Coquette had begged hard to be allowed to

preface or assist the service with her harmonium, but her prayer was explicitly refused. Indeed, there might not have been much in the music to harmonise with the stern and matter-of-fact exhortation which the Minister had prepared. It is true that, as he warmed to his subject, he indulged in the rare license of breaking away from his preconceived plan of argument and illustration. He was dealing with things which were now before his eyes; and, as his rude and homely eloquence became more and more touched with enthusiasm, it seemed as though the inspiration of the sea had fallen on him. "What meanest thou, O sleeper!" was his text; and the cry with which the sailors awakened Jonah seemed the Minister's own cry to the men who now lived along these lonely coasts. Indeed, there was a singular and forcible realism about the address which surprised Coquette; it was so different from the long and weary sermons on doctrine to which she had of late been accustomed. The Minister had borrowed all his imagery from his recent experiences. He described the storm—the rushing of the water—the gloom of the hills—the creaking of cordage—until you could have fancied that Jonah was actually trying to make for Crinan Bay. The sailors were thoroughly aroused and interested. It

was to them a thrilling and powerful narrative of something that had actually happened—something far more real and human than the vague stories and legends of the Western Isles—those faintly-coloured and beautiful things that happened so far away and so long ago that the sound of them now is like the sound of a sea-shell.

Of course there came the application, which was equally practical, if less picturesque. The fishermen, who were now lazily lying on the grassy slopes above the Tobermory cottages—satisfied with the drowsy warmth and the sensation of rest—the sailors themselves, who were busy from day to day with the mysteries of the elements, fighting with the accidents of the present world, regarding only the visible horizon around them—they were but as sleepers asleep in a storm. For outside of this visible horizon lay another and more mysterious horizon, which was daily drawing closer to them, bearing with it the doom of humanity. Hour by hour the world was being narrowed by this approaching bank of cloud; and when at last it burst, and the lightning of death gleamed out from its sombre shadows, would there then be time to seek for the Jonah who must be thrown overboard? The old man, with his bared head and his eager manner,

seemed himself a prophet sent up to denounce Nineveh and all her iniquities; and so impressive and resonant was his voice—heard over the strange calm of the sea—that more than one of the sailors had unconsciously turned to gaze far out towards the western horizon, as though expecting to find there the gathering storm-clouds of which he spoke.

After this forenoon service had been finished, a dilemma occurred. The Minister had been furnished with no rules for the observance of the Sabbath on board a vessel. He had no precedents for his guidance. He could not simply request everybody to come indoors and take a book. Coquette indeed, resolutely remained on deck.

"Well," said Lady Drum, "we are out o' doors as much as we can be, and it would be no worse, surely, if we went on shore."

Not even Lord Earlshope had thought of continuing their voyage; that was a thing which, on the face of it, could not be permitted. But when the Minister was confronted by the difficulty which Lady Drum had discovered, he did not know well what to do. He was averse to their going ashore and walking about on the Sabbath morning, to the scandal of all decent folk; on the other hand, there was little difference between that and sitting on

deck to look at the sea and the houses, while going below and immuring themselves all day was out of the question. At last his natural good sense triumphed. He gave his consent to their leaving the boat for a certain time—in fact, until the hour for afternoon service on deck, if they chose—but he would remain on board.

"You will come ashore, will you not?" said Lord Earlshope to Coquette.

"No; I wish to remain with my uncle," said Coquette, hurriedly.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said Lady Drum. "Would you have an old woman like me stravaiging about the shore by myself?"

"But Lord Earlshope will go with you," said Coquette, timidly.

"That does not matter. He is no a companion for me; so get on your hat and come away at once."

Coquette did so, and got into the pinnace, determined to cling closely to Lady Drum's side. As they neared the shore, the latter remarked that the village seemed quite deserted.

"The fishermen spend their Sundays either indoors or up on the hills," said Lord Earlshope. "I believe the married ones prefer the hills."

Perhaps that haphazard allusion to marriage

remained in his mind; for, after they had landed and walked some distance round the shore, until they discovered a pleasant place from which to sit and watch the seabirds over the Sound, he said, rather indolently—

"I wonder how many of those poor men have a pleasant home to return to after the fatigue and discomfort of a night out at the fishing."

As this was a problem which neither of the ladies with him could readily solve, the only answer was the plashing of the clear sea-water on the stones. Presently he said, in the same careless way—

"Do you know, Lady Drum, that physiologists say we become quite different people every seven years? Don't look surprised—I am going to explain. They say that every atom and every particle of us have in that time been used up and replaced; so that we are not the same persons we were seven years before. It is but natural to suppose that the mind changes with the body, if not so completely. You, for example, must find that you have not the same opinions on many subjects that you had seven years ago. And in the case of young people especially, they do positively and actually change the whole of their mental and physical structure in

even less time than that. You follow this introductory discourse?" he added, with a laugh.

"Quite," said the elderly lady, "though I am no so sure it is a proper one for a Sabbath morning."

"You must hear me out, and with attention. The subject is profound. If I am a different person at the end of seven years, why should I be bound by promises I made when I was my former self?"

"Mercy on us?" said Lady Drum. "Is it a riddle?"

"Yes. Shall I help you to solve it by an illustration? Suppose one of those sturdy young fishermen here, when he is a mere boy of nineteen—undeveloped and quite vacant as to experience—is induced to marry some woman who has a bad nature and a hideous temper. He is a fool, of course. But seven years afterwards he is not so great a fool—indeed he has become another person, according to the physiological theory—and the new fisherman hates and abhors his wife—perceives the deformity of her character—is revolted by her instead of attracted to her. Now, why should he be bound by the promise of the former fisherman? Indeed, she too is another woman. Why should the old marriage bind together these two

new persons? It has gone away as the mark on your finger-nail goes away—they have outgrown it."

Lady Drum began to look alarmed, and Lord Earlshope, catching sight of her face, laughed lightly.

"No," he said; "don't imagine me a monster. I don't want to unmarry anybody; it is only a theory. Yet why shouldn't there be a Statute of Limitations with regard to other matters than money?"

"You mean," said Lady Drum, solemnly, "that I, Margaret Ainslie Drum, wife of Sir Peter of that name, am no longer a married woman, but free to marry whom I please?"

"Precisely," said Lord Earlshope, apparently with a sincere joy that she had so thoroughly understood his argument. "You might marry me, or anybody—according to the theory, you know."

"Yes—according to the theory," remarked Lady Drum, endeavouring to repress her virtuous wrath; "of course, according to the theory."

With that he fairly burst out laughing.

"I do believe I have shocked you," he said, "in my endeavour to find out an argument why that imaginary poor fisherman should be released from his bonds. It was only a joke, you know, Lady

Drum; for of course one could not unsettle all the marriages in England merely to benefit one or two people. Yet it does seem hard that when a man is a fool and marries, then ceases to be a fool and wishes to be free from his blunder, there is no hope for him. You don't seem to care to speculate about those matters, do you?" he added, carelessly, as he tried to twine two bits of grass. "Have you ever looked round the whole circle of your acquaintances, and wondered—supposing all present marriages were dissolved—what new combinations they would form in a week's time?"

"I confess," said Lady Drum, with some sarcasm, "that I have never amused myself in so ingenious a way. Pray, Lord Earlshope, what was it in Mr. Cassilis' sermon that provoked these meditations of yours?"

"Oh, they are not of recent date," said his lordship, with a fine indifference; "it is no new thing for me to discover that some of my friends would like to be unmarried. My notion of their right to do so is only a phantasy, of course, which is not to be taken *au grand sérieux*."

"I should think not," said Lady Drum, with some dignity.

Indeed, it was not until they had strolled along the shore some distance on their way back to the

boat that the frown left her face. Her natural good sense came to her aid, and showed her that Lord Earlshope had merely been amusing himself, as was his wont, with idle and morbid fancies. He had obviously no reason to ventilate anything so horrible and dangerous as a free criticism on the rights of marriage. What was it to him if all the fishermen in Tobermory, or in a dozen Tobermories, remained up on the hills during the Sundays in order to get away from their wives? So the grave and handsome face of the old lady gradually recovered its urbane and benignant expression, and she even ventured to rebuke Lord Earlshope, in a good-humoured way, about the inappropriate occasion he had chosen for his lecture on physiology.

Coquette had said nothing all this time. She walked by Lady Drum's side, with an absent look in her face and eyes, not paying much attention to what was said. She seemed somewhat relieved to get into the pinnace again, so that Lady Drum expressed a hope that her duties of companion had not been irksome to her.

"Oh, no!" she said; "I am ready to go with you whenever you please."

But later on in the day they had another quiet chat to themselves, and Coquette became more confidential.

"I do not understand it; there is something wrong in it, surely," she said, with a thoughtful look in her eyes, "when a young man like Lord Earlshope seems to have nothing more in the world to do—to have lost interest in everything—and at times to be gloomy and as if he were angry with the world. Have you not noticed it, Lady Drum? Have you not seen it in his face when he is talking idly? And then he says something in a bitter way, and laughs; and it is not pleasant to hear. Why, he has lost interest in everything! Why does he spend his time at home, reading books, and anxious to avoid seeing people?"

Lady Drum regarded her with astonishment.

"Well, well," she said; "who would have thought that those dreaming dark eyes of yours were studying people so accurately, and that beneath that knot of ribbon in your wild lumps of hair the oddest notions were being formed? And what concern have ye wi' Lord Earlshope's idle habits, and his restlessness and dissatisfaction?"

"I?" said Coquette, calmly. "It is not my concern; but it is sad to see a man whose life is wasted—who has no longer any object in it."

"He enjoys himself," said Lady Drum.

"He does not enjoy himself," said Coquette, with decision. "He is very polite, and does not

intrude his troubles on any one. You might think he passed the time pleasantly—that he was content with his idleness. I do not believe it—no, I do believe there is not a more wretched man alive."

Lady Drum elevated her eyebrows. Instead of having one problem in humanity before her, she had now two. And why had this young lady taken so pathetic an interest in Lord Earlshope's wretchedness?

CHAPTER XXV.

Coquette's Presentiments.

It was impossible this condition of affairs could last. A far less observant man than Lord Earlshope was bound to perceive the singular change which had fallen over Coquette's manner. Hitherto she had appeared to him to be the very personification of joyousness—to live a graceful, happy, almost unthinking life, in an atmosphere of tender emotions and kindly sentiments, which were as the sunshine and the sea-breezes to her. Why should this young creature, with the calm and beautiful face, whose dark eyes showed a perfect serenity and placidity of soul, be visited with the rougher passions, the harsher experiences, which befall less fortunate people? That was not her *rôle*. It was her business to be happy—to be waited upon—to be pleased. She had but to sit on deck, in her French costume of dark-green tartan and black lace, with a book lying open but unread on her knee, with her hand inside Lady Drum's arm, with the clear

light of the sea and the clouds shining in her face and in the darkness of her eyes, and leave troubles and cares and vexations to those born under a less fortunate star.

All that was over. Coquette was *distraite*, restless, miserable. The narrow limits of the yacht were a prison to her. She was silent and reserved, and seemed merely to wait with a resigned air for the end of the voyage. Had the Whaup been there, she would probably have entered into confidences with him, or even relieved the blank monotony by quarrelling with him. As it was, she listened to Lady Drum and Lord Earlshope talking, without adding a syllable to the conversation; and, while she dutifully waited on her uncle, and arranged his books and papers for him, she went about in a mute way, which he took as a kindly observance of his wish not to be disturbed during his hours of study.

"What has become o' your blythe spirits, Catherine?" he asked on the Monday morning as they were leaving Tobermory Bay. "I do not hear ye sing to yourself now? Yet I am told by Lady Drum that the voyage has done ye a world o' good."

"Oh, I am very well, uncle," she said, eagerly.

"I am very well, indeed; and whenever you please to go back to Airlie, I shall be glad to go too."

"That is good news," said the Minister, cheerfully, "good news. And we maun see about getting home again; for I am anxious to hear how young Mr. Pettigrew acquitted himself yesterday, and I would fain hope there is no dissension among my people this morning, such as the enemy is anxious to reap profit by."

"Have you an enemy, uncle?" said Coquette.

"We have all an enemy," said the Minister, so impressively that his niece looked alarmed—"an enemy who is ever watchful to take advantage o' our absence, or our thochtlessness, who goeth about like a raging lion, seeking whom he may devour."

"But is he in Airlie?" asked Coquette, who was still puzzled.

"Why, your uncle means the devil," said Lady Drum, gaily, as she entered the saloon, "who is in Airlie as elsewhere—espaycially when there's whisky afoot and the Pensioner is asked to bring out his fiddle. Come up the stairs, both o' ye, and see the wonderfu' places we are passing. I'm thinking we have got to the end o' the lochs and the islands at last, and there is nothing left for us but to gang straight out into the sea. I hope it'll deal gently

wi' us," added Lady Drum, with an involuntary shiver.

When they went on deck—Coquette keeping close by her uncle, as if she feared being addressed by a stranger—it was clear that the good weather which had so far accompanied them showed no signs of breaking. Over the blue western sea there was but the roughness of a slight breeze, which was only sufficient to fill the *Caroline's* sails; while the jagged coast of the mainland, with the mountains of Ardnamurchan and Moidart, lay steeped in a faint mist under the morning sunlight. The yellow light, too, from the east, gleamed along the peaked hills of the islands out on their left—a drowsy and misty light that blurred the horizon-line, where the grey-blue sky and the grey-blue water faded into each other.

Lord Earlshope was surprised to hear the Minister talk of returning immediately.

"We must, at all events, show Miss Cassilis the wonders of Loch Scavaig and Coruisk," he said, "even though you should have to go over to-morrow by Torren to Broadford, and catch the steamer there. We shall make Loch Scavaig this evening if the wind does not fail us."

"I hope the wind will play no tricks with us," said Lady Drum. "I shall never forget what I

suffered in this very place when I first went to Skye many years ago—indeed, when Sir Peter and I were just married."

"You might wait a couple of months without catching such a chance as we have to-day," said Lord Earlshope. "But to return to this question of your stay. Don't you mean to visit the Spar Cave, and go up Glen Sligachan, and ascend the Quiraing?"

It was with a dull sense of pain that Coquette heard the reply. The Minister said there was no absolute hurry—that his niece would probably like to visit those wild and romantic scenes, of which she must have heard and read. Coquette accepted her fate mutely; but she took the opportunity of saying, a few minutes afterwards, to Lady Drum—

"I hope we shall not stay long in this place—this wild island. It must be horrible and ghastly, from what they say."

"It is the most desolate and awful place it is possible to imagine," said Lady Drum; "a place that reminds you o' a world that had long ago suffered a judgment-day, and been burnt up wi' fire. For days after I saw it first I used to dream about it—the black and still water and the twisted rocks, and the stillness o' the place. It would be fearfu'

to be left alone there—at night—wi' the sound o' the burns running in the darkness."

Coquette shuddered.

"I will not go ashore," she said. "There is no reason for our going ashore, if we must go back at once to Airlie."

So the day wore on and the stately *Caroline* with her bow coquettishly dipping to the waves, drew gradually towards the north, passing the broad mouth of the Sound of Sleat, and coming in view of the sharp rocks of Canna, beyond the mountains of Rum Island. They were now close by the southern shores of Skye. Coquette became more and more disturbed. It seemed to her that she was being taken to some gloomy prison, from which no escape was possible. Lady Drum continued to describe the sombre and desolate appearance of the place they were going to, until these pictures produced the most profound effect on the girl's imagination. The *Caroline* seemed to go forward through the water with a relentless persistency, and Coquette, as the afternoon approached, and she saw far in the north the misty outlines of the shore towards which they were tending, gave way to an unreasoning, despairing terror.

Lady Drum was amazed.

"You are not afraid o' rocks and water?" she said.

"Afraid of them? No," said the girl. "I am afraid of the place—I know not why—and of our remaining there. I would rather be away; I would rather be going back. It is a presentiment I have: I cannot understand it, but it makes me tremble."

"That is foolish," said Lady Drum. "You have not been yourself since your cousin left."

"I wish he were here now," murmured Coquette.

"He would laugh you out of your fears," said the elderly lady, in a cheerful way. "Come, rouse yourself up and dismiss those gloomy fancies of yours. We shall see you to-morrow on a little Highland pony, going round such precipices as are fit to take your breath away; and you will be as light-hearted and as careless as if you were in my drawing-room at Castle Cawmil with an open piano before you. By the way, you have not played us anything since your cousin left us at Oban."

"I cannot play just now," said Coquette, sitting calm and cold, with her eyes fixed with a vague apprehensiveness on the coast they were drawing near.

"What a strange creature you are," said Lady Drum, affectionately. "You are either all fire, and light, and sunshine, or as deep and morose as a

well on a dark day. There is Lord Earlshope, who, I am certain, thinks he has offended you; and he keeps at a distance, and watches ye in a penitent fashion, as if he would give his ears to see you laugh again; I think I maun explain to him that it is no his fault——"

"No, no, no, Lady Drum!" exclaimed Coquette, in a low voice. "You must not speak to him."

"Hoity toity! Is he to believe that I have quarrelled wi' him as well; and are we a' to put the man in irons in his own yacht?"

"Please don't tell him anything about me," pleaded Coquette.

"But look at him at this moment," said Lady Drum, with sudden compassion; "look at him up at the bow there—standing all by himself—without a human being taking notice o' him—looking helplessly at naething, and doubtless wondering whether he will get a word addressed to him at dinner. Is it fair, my young lady, to serve a man in that fashion in his own boat?"

"You may go and speak to him," said Coquette, eagerly. "Yes, you must speak to him—but not about me. He does not want to talk about me; and you would only put wrong things into his head. Please go, Lady Drum, and talk to him."

"And what for should it rest on an old woman

like me to amuse a young man! What for am I to talk to him, and ye sitting here as mute and as mum as a mouse?"

"Because—because——" said Coquette, with hesitation, "because I think I am afraid of this island. I am not angry with him—with anybody—but I—I——. Oh, Lady Drum!" she suddenly exclaimed, "won't you persuade them to come away from this place at once, instead of remaining for days? I cannot do it—I cannot remain. I will go away by myself, if they will let me take the steamer."

She spoke quite wildly; and Lady Drum looked at her with some alarm.

"I cannot understand a bit o' this," she said, gravely. "What for have ye a fear o' an island? Or is it that ye are so anxious to follow your cousin?"

"I cannot tell you what it is," said Coquette, "for I cannot explain in your language. It is a presentiment—a terror—I do not know; I only know that if we remain in this island long—"

She trembled so violently as she spoke that Lady Drum feared the girl had been attacked by some nervous fever. Her face, too, was pale; and the dark and beautiful eyes were full of a strange lustre, obviously the result of great excitement.

At this moment some order of the skipper recalled the eyes of Coquette from looking vaguely over the sea towards the south; and as she turned her face to the bow, Lady Drum felt the hand that held hers tighten its grasp, for the *Caroline* was slowly creeping-in and under the gloom of the weird Cuchullin Hills.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Confession at last.

SUNSET in the wild Loch Scavaig. Far up amid the shoulders and peaks of Garsven there were flashes of flame and the glow of the western skies, with here and there a beam of ruddy and misty light touching the summits of the mountains in the east; but down here, in the black and desolate lake, the bare and riven rocks showed their fantastic forms in a cold grey twilight. There was a murmur of streams in the stillness, and the hollow silence was broken from time to time by the call of wild-fowl. Otherwise the desolate scene was as silent as death, and the only moving thing abroad was the red light in the clouds. The *Caroline* lay motionless in the dark water. As the sunset fell the mountains seemed to grow larger; the twisted and precipitous cliffs that shot down into the sea grew more and more distant; while a pale blue vapour gathered here and there, as if the spirits of the mountains were advancing under a veil.

Oddly enough, the terror of Coquette had largely subsided when the *Caroline* had cast anchor. She regarded the gloomy shores with aversion and distrust; but she no longer trembled. Indeed, the place seemed to have exercised some fascination over her; for, while all the others were busy with their own affairs, she did not cease to scan with strange and wondering eyes the sombre stretch of water, the picturesque and desolate shore, and the mystic splendours of the twilight overhead. She kept apart from her friends; and seemed even to regard Lady Drum with a distant and apprehensive look.

Lady Drum resolved that she would speak to the Minister, when occasion offered. She was afraid that this niece of his was an incomprehensible young person, given over to visions and dreams, and requiring to be kept well in hand.

Dinner was rather a gloomy affair. Lord Earlshope seemed to consider that, for some reason or other, a conspiracy had been formed against him. He was very courteous and quiet, but spoke chiefly to the Minister, and that somewhat formally. Lady Drum in vain endeavoured to be lively.

Suddenly the Minister seemed to perceive that there was something wrong. He looked from one to the other; and at last he said—

"This wild scenery has had its effect upon us. We have grown very grave, have we not, Lady Drum?"

"I think we are downright solemn," said Lady Drum, waking herself up as if from a nightmare. "I cannot understand it. Miss Coquette—as I am told they sometimes ca' ye—what does it all mean?"

Coquette looked up with a start.

"I do not know," she said. "To me these hills look dreadful. I am afraid of them. I should be glad to be away."

Lord Earlshope did not reply to her, or endeavour to reason her out of her vague impressions. On the contrary, he regarded her—when no one else was looking—with a watchful and rather wistful scrutiny, which seemed to leave rather a sad impression on his own face.

The night was cold; and, after dinner, no one proposed to go on deck. Indeed, the autumn was rapidly closing in upon them; and there was comfort in the yellow light of the lamps, the warmth, and the open books down below. Lord Earlshope and Lady Drum proceeded to engage in a game of cribbage; the Minister took up a bundle of MSS.; Coquette receded into a corner.

Then she stole out of the place, and went up on deck. How wonderful was the darkness now!

for it seemed to burn with all manner of weird and fanciful lights. There were white stars dancing on the water—one great planet quivering on the dark plain as if it were a moon. The moon itself was a thin sickle down in the south—far away in a mystic world of green. Then over the peaks of the Cuchullins there still lay the lambent traces of the twilight—a pale, metallic, yellow glow, which was far too faint to show on the black surface of the sea. A wind had sprung up, too, and it brought with it the sound of the mountain streams from out of the solemn stillness of the night.

There came into her head the refrain of a song which she used to hear the sailors sing in St. Nazaire—

Après trois ans d'absence
Loin de France,
Ah! quel beau jour,
Que le jour du retour!

"Why cannot I go back there?" she murmured to herself, "where there were no miserable days, no miserable nights? I am terrified of this place—of the people—of what I have become myself. If I could only fly away down to the South, and hear them singing that on the Loire—

Ah! quel beau jour
Que le jour du retour!

—that is what I would say also, when I saw old Nanette come out running to see me—and she would laugh, and she would cry to see me—."

The tears were running down her own cheeks. Suddenly there stood by her a tall figure in the darkness, and she started to hear her own name pronounced.

"Why do you sit up here alone, Miss Cassilis?" said Lord Earlshope.

She could not answer. He took a seat beside her, and said—

"There is another question I want to ask you. Why have you avoided me these two days, and made me as though I were a stranger to you? Let us be frank with each other. Are you vexed with me because—in a moment of foolishness which I deeply regret—I revealed to you a secret which I ought to have kept to myself?"

"I am not vexed," she said in a low voice. "You must not suppose that."

"But I must suppose something," he said. "Why should I be your *bête noire*, from whom you must fly at every conceivable moment? If I appear on deck you seek refuge with Lady Drum, or go below. If I go below you come on deck. If I join in a conversation you become silent. Why should this be so? I proposed this excursion, as you know, for

your especial benefit. The whole thing was planned merely because it might probably amuse you; and yet you are the only one on board who seems unhappy. Why? I broke my compact about returning to Airlie after seeing you a day or two on the voyage, partly through indolence, and partly because I fancied I might make matters smooth and pleasant for you if you went farther. I find, on the contrary, that I have become a sort of bogus—a kill-joy."

"Oh, no, it is not so!" she said, hurriedly. "There is no one in fault—no one but myself."

"But you are not in fault," he protested. "There has been no fault committed; and I want to know how the old condition of affairs is to be restored. I cannot bear to see you suffering this restraint from morning till night. Rather than have you pass such another day as I know you have passed to-day I would row ashore this moment, and take my chance of getting lodgings or walking over to Broadford, so that you should have no fear of to-morrow."

"Oh, no, no!" she said, in despair; "you must not do that. And you must not suppose that I am angry with you. But after what you did say the other day——"

"That is it," he said, in a tone of profound dis-

appointment. "I had already fancied my careless talk was a blunder, but I see only now how irretrievable it is. Well, I cannot help it. You shall not suffer the penalty of my stupidity, however. To-morrow morning you shall be free."

So he went away; and she sat still, silent and immovable, with a great pain at her heart. She listened to the murmur of the water along the shore, and it seemed to have taken up the refrain that had been running in her memory, only that it was more vague and more sad. "*Trois ans d'absence . . loin de France . . jour du retour.*" Again she was startled by the approach of some one. She knew that Lord Earlshope had returned. He brought with him a thick shawl, and he said, in a somewhat formal and courteous way—

"Lady Drum asks you to put this round you, if you prefer to remain on deck. But the night is chilly, and you ought to go below, I think."

"I do not know why you should speak to me in that tone," she said, with some slight touch of reproach in her voice. "If all this unfortunate thing has happened, why make it worse? I hope you will not make us strangers to each other, or think me ungrateful for all the kindness that you did show to me."

For an instant he stood irresolute, and then he said to her—in so low a voice that it was scarcely heard in the murmur of the sea—

"And I have to thank you for something also. You have given me back a little of my old belief in the sweetness and innocence of good women, and in the nobleness and the mystery of human life. That is not a light matter. It is something to have some of one's old faith back again, however dearly it may be bought. The price has been perhaps heavier than you may have imagined. I have striven this day or two back to make you believe that I had almost forgotten what I told you. I shall never forget it—nor do I wish to. I may tell you that now, when I am about to ask you to say good-bye. It is not for you to be annoyed or troubled with such matters. You will go back to Airlie. You will scarcely remember that I ever told you my wretched and foolish story. But I shall not go back to Airlie—at least not for a while; and when we do meet again, I hope you will have forgotten all this, and will not be afraid to meet me. So good-bye now, for I shall not see you in the morning."

He held out his hand, but she made no response. What was it he heard in the stillness of the night?

Moved by a great fear, he knelt down beside her, and looked into her face. Her eyes were filled with tears; and the sound he had heard was that of a low and bitter sobbing. There broke upon him a revelation far more terrible than that which had informed him of his own sorrow; and it was with a new anxiety in his voice that he said to her—

"Why are you distressed. It is nothing to you —my going away? It cannot be anything to you, surely?"

"It is very much—your going away," she said, with a calmness of despair which startled him; "I cannot bear it. And yet you must go—and never see me again. That will be better for you and for me."

He rose to his feet suddenly; and even in the starlight her tearful and upturned eyes saw that his face was ghastly pale.

"What have I done? What have I done?" he exclaimed, as if accusing himself to the still heavens that burned with their countless stars above him. "My own blunders, my own weakness, I can answer for—I can accept my punishment—but if this poor girl has been made to suffer through me—that is more than I can bear. Coquette—Coquette—tell me you do not mean all this! You cannot mean it —you do not understand my position—you tell me

what it is madness to think of? What you say would be to any other man a joy unspeakable —the beginning of a new life to him; but to me——"

He shuddered only, and turned away from her. She rose, and took his hand gently, and said to him, in her low, quiet voice—

"I do not know what you mean; but you must not accuse yourself for me, or give yourself pain. I have made a confession—it was right to do that, for you were going away, and you might have gone with a wrong thought of me, and have looked back and said I was ungrateful. Now you will go away knowing that I am still your friend—that I shall think of you sometimes — and that I shall pray never, never to see you any more, until we are old people, and we may meet, and laugh at the old stupid folly."

There was a calm sadness in her tone that was very bitter to him: and the next moment he was saying to her in almost a wild way—

"It shall not end thus. Let the past be past, Coquette; and the future ours. Look at the sea out there—far away beyond that you and I may begin a new life; and the sea itself shall wash out all that we want to forget. Will you come, Coquette? Will you give up all your pretty ways, and your quiet

home, and your amiable friends, to link yourself to a desperate man, and snatch the joy that the people in this country would deny us? Let us seek a new country for ourselves. You love me, my poor girl, don't you? and see! my hand trembles with the thought of being able to take you away, and fight for you, and make for you a new world, with new surroundings, where you would have but one friend, and one slave. What do you say, Coquette? Why should we two be for ever miserable? Coquette——!"

She drew back from him in fear.

"I am afraid of you now," she said, with a strange shudder. "You are another man. What are you?—what are you?—Ah! I do see another face——"

She staggered backward; and then, with a quick wild cry, fell insensible. He sprang forward to catch her; and he had scarcely done so when the Minister hastily approached.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said.

"She has been sitting too long alone," said Lord Earlshope, as Lady Drum came quietly forward to seize the girl's hands. "The darkness had got hold of her imagination—and that wild light up there——"

For at this moment there appeared over the

black peaks of the Cuchullins a great, shifting flush of pink—that shone up the dark skies and then died out in a circle of pale violet fire. In the clear heavens this wild glare gleamed and faded, so that the sea also had its pallid colours blotting out the white points of the stars. Mr. Cassilis paid little attention to the explanation; but it seemed reasonable enough; for the girl, on coming to herself, looked all round at this strange glow of rose-colour overhead, and again shuddered violently.

"She has been nervous all day," said Lady Drum; "she should not have been left alone."

They took her down below; but Lord Earlshope remained above. In a little while he went down into the saloon, where Mr. Cassilis sat alone, reading.

"Miss Cassilis will be well in the morning, I hope," he said, somewhat distantly.

"Oh, doubtless, doubtless. She is nervous and excitable—as her father was—but it is nothing serious."

"I hope not," said Lord Earlshope.

He took out writing materials, and hastily wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper, which he folded up and put in an envelope. Then he bade Mr. Cassilis good-night, and retired.

But towards midnight Coquette, lying awake,